

BI@Home:
News from your home away from home

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A WORD FROM RABBI FELLMAN



In my elementary school each year, the headmaster would stand at the front of the room and recite “*Im haSeder Lo B’Seder, ach, zeh lo B’Seder. HaSeder Tzarich l’hiyot B’Seder.*” Roughly translated as “If the Seder is not in Seder, then, this is not in Seder. The Seder needs to be in Seder.”

According to Merriam-Webster, the word “Seder” was first used in English in 1865. It’s then that it began to refer to the Jewish home or community service including a ceremonial dinner held on the first or first and second evenings of the Passover in commemoration of the exodus from Egypt. The word “Seder” from the Hebrew סדר, also means order, one of the portions of Torah or Mishna (also in an order), and is from the same root as the word Siddur (our prayerbook that has all of our prayers composed and in order). In short, our Seder is called the Seder because it has a set order to it. Utilizing the different uses of the word Seder, what the headmaster was actually saying was “If the Seder is not in order, then it’s not ok. The Seder needs to be in order.”

I always felt strongly that this was the case, that the Seder had to be in order, and that it all had to be done. After all, that was the way it had “always” been done - since Moses got the Torah from Sinai and possibly even before at the actual Exodus. It must be in order. Then I became a parent, and God laughed.

As a parent, I learned that our best plans sometimes lead to our biggest shortfalls. The idea of doing everything in the Haggadah, of doing the whole Seder when it was late enough that it “counted” became a burden and not a joy once we had children. Children who turned into overtired terrors, made no part of this a tradition worth building and repeating.

Taking a deep breath, I took a step back. What needed to happen to keep Passover as a holiday of freedom, tradition, and family? Change up the order! Relax our standards and expectations. When 8:00 pm seemed too late to start (the Seders should start after dark), we started them early and changed the order. We began at 5:00 pm and did a regular kiddush and then did the special big one sanctifying the day in place of the third cup’s blessing, after it was dark. By freeing ourselves from the “order,” we created an order that worked for us and helped us build lasting memories. When the second Seder seemed too repetitive, we added games in place of Maggid, playing “Pin the Baby Moses in the Nile,” folding 10 Plague Origami, and holding Lego pyramid building contests.



This year will be our second year of doing Seders differently because of COVID. We will again be “freeing” ourselves from the order of the Seder to make the timing, the rituals, and the tradition work for us. On Saturday night (the first night of Seder), we will be starting our Seder in the late afternoon, and move the special kiddush marking the end of shabbat and the start of Passover to a later cup, after it becomes dark. We will be creating memories, traditions, and fun. This year, we will all laugh.

PASSOVER, THEN AND NOW
PAULA SOMMER, BETH ISRAEL PRESIDENT

It is said that Passover is the most celebrated American Jewish holiday, even more than the High Holidays. Most of us have favorite memories of pre-seder adventures, and gatherings with friends and family.



I was unexpectedly part of history just before Pesach in 1989. There was a march and memorial service at Temple Emanuel for Worcester native Abbie Hoffman. I hoped to attend the march, if my Seder preparation was under control. A huge crowd, maybe 500 people, included some really tall men. How was I to know that Abbie had been friends with Bill Walton of the Boston Celtics? Well, he was. I found myself walking next to Walton, just as a local TV crew started filming. I felt I reached to his waist. We marched from his mother's small white frame house to the red brick temple a few blocks away. When I returned to work, I was told that I had been spotted on TV.

More recently, I took advantage of a free pass to Wachusett to get in some spring skiing a few years ago, just before Pesach. Not a good idea, as I twisted my back in a fall. Actually, I broke several vertebrae. How was I going to cook and host 10 people at my Seder a few nights later? Our BI Community came to the rescue. As soon as she heard of my mishap, our amazing Rabbi Fellman invited me to bring my guests, a dozen of us in all, to come to her house. "No problem," she said. "We'll just get an extra table and chairs from BI and expand into the living room; I have plenty of food." Such a wonderfully generous and hospitable spirit!

Usually, the preparation for the holiday, hard as it is, frees me to enjoy the holiday. Some of us do spring cleaning and turn over the kitchen, i.e., we use totally different sets of dishes/pots/etc. Bringing this Passover stuff up from basement storage, or down from the attic, is not trivial. The cleaning, the last-minute rush to get ready, can be exhausting. The next week is liberating. I have a sense of relief when we sit down to the first seder, because the house has been cleaned as much as it will be, the kitchen has been scrubbed, the dishes have been changed over, shopping has been done, hametz has been sold, cooking has been done, and I have done the best I could.



Some people like to read and discourse during the evening, others are happy with 4 questions, 4 children and 10 plagues, and now, let's eat. Whatever your practice, as we are looking forward to society opening up in the next several months, I wish you a joyous and liberating holiday.

YOU CAN STILL JOIN THURSDAY MEDITATION!

Elena Salmoirago-Blotcher has resumed weekly meditation classes on Thursdays, from 6:00 - 6:45 p.m. A cardiologist who practiced in her native Italy and in Israel, Elena now serves as Senior Research Scientist at the Centers for Behavioral and Preventive Medicine at the Miriam Hospital. Elena has trained in mindfulness stress reduction since 2003. She is a wonderful group leader, so don't miss this opportunity to add some peace and clarity to your world. Newcomers are welcome! Feel free to share this information with friends who may be interested. The Zoom link is in your weekly emails.

RACIAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE – JOIN US FOR THE UNITY SEDER

ALAN HARRIS

The Racial Justice Initiative continues in its mission to learn, teach, and advocate on this important issue. This ad hoc committee is engaged in learning more about racial inequity in our society and seeking avenues for advocacy to work towards racial justice.

Join us on Thursday, March 11, at 7:30 pm, as Worcester's Jewish and African American communities reunite for the annual Unity Seder (this time on Zoom), sponsored by the Worcester Black-Jewish Alliance, an affiliate of the Jewish Federation of Central Massachusetts. During this Unity Seder, let us learn together what it means to be free, work to understand how we may still be enslaved to old prejudices, and visualize each other's struggles, using our Passover customs as keys of opportunity to share our humanity with each other.

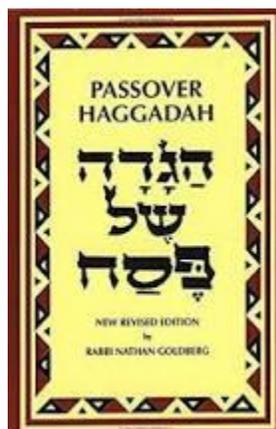
The Racial Justice Initiative is offering and/or highlighting at least one event a month. In March, in addition to the Unity Seder, we are offering a Members Together program with a civil rights theme (details elsewhere in this edition). In April we'll be hosting a Watch Party and discussion, screening a documentary about James Baldwin called "I Am Not Your Negro." We're looking to have a book talk in May. In addition, we'll be sharing poems and videos in the weekly email message.

Do you want more details about this important initiative? Are you interested in participating in planning future events? Contact Alan Harris at alwharris@aol.com.

PASSOVER IS COMING! PASSOVER IS COMING!

Our second Pesach during the COVID pandemic is coming up soon. This year many of us will still feel disoriented. Many BI families have traditions of large seders with family who join us from all over, traditions that we will have to forgo or reimagine for yet another year. Our old routines aren't accessible to us and the new ones are too new to feel traditional. Still, we want to make the most of this Festival of Freedom.

BI is here to help! Members will be receiving Passover guides via email and complimentary Passover reading material via postal mail. We'll keep you posted on where to get Pesach food, haggadot, and other resources. We'll arrange to sell your hametz and help you burn the crumbs. We'll have services (via Zoom) and we'll do seder matching so members can join forces and have a virtual Seder together with one or more other families. We'll even supply some recipe suggestions. We'll provide the information you need about Passover, both in weekly emails and special targeted Passover ones. Watch your inbox for all this and more!



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: BUNNY CALLAHAN AND VICTOR SAFFRIN PAULA SOMMER, BETH ISRAEL PRESIDENT

This month I would like to acknowledge a couple who have really made their presence felt at BI since moving to Worcester seven years ago. Our Bunny is often called “Energizer Bunny,” a nickname she has earned with her myriad activities. She seems to be constantly on the move: organizing food drives for BI, working with Social Action to prepare food for many local organizations, delivering food for Rachel’s Table, and enjoying Zooming to faraway places. It’s through Bunny’s efforts and her contributions to sponsorship that we were able to offer our congregational virtual trip to Paris this past January.

Bunny is also a committed environmentalist. She was the force behind introducing composting at BI Kiddush lunch and helped establish the BI Tree Committee. She is a member of our Welcome Engage Inspire Membership committee, which is fitting since she is welcoming, engaging, and inspiring to everyone she meets.

Victor is the head of our Ritual Committee, which has been doing an amazing job, under his leadership, to craft engaging services within our current COVID-imposed constraints. We started with a live-stream model, and then transitioned to Zoom for more satisfying services for congregation and prayer leaders. Victor is a member of the Synagogue Streaming Services Working Group, which plans services in detail. Most of us see him leading services with the rabbi on shabbat and with Bunny during the week. On holidays, we recognize that spiffy guy with matching bow tie and mask.

Victor and Bunny are also a singing couple. Victor is a long-time member of Gentlemen Songsters and their barbershop quartet, Quarentunes, and Bunny is a member of the Shir Joy Chorus. It is a pleasure to hear them harmonize together during BI daily minyan. Bunny and Victor: we thank you for keeping our synagogue humming with music, good ideas, and lots of hard work.



Note: Future editions of BI@Home will spotlight others of our unsung heroes, volunteers at BI working mostly behind the scenes. If you have ideas of whom to profile, contact Paula Sommer at psommer2012@gmail.com or call the BI office to arrange to speak with Paula.

PROJECT ZUG – PESACH CYCLE AND MORE

Our partnership with Hadar Institute’s Project Zug continues to bear fruit in the form of new insights for so many of our members. BI congregants are participating in group classes, in individually selected courses with partners they choose, and meeting new study partners through *hevruta* matching.

In preparation for Pesach, we’ve registered for a group experience of Project Zug’s new Pesach program. It is called “The Seder and the Song of Songs: A Love Story in Four Scenes” and was developed by Rabbi Aviva Richman. Shir HaShirim (The Song of Songs) is different from other books of our bible in a few ways. Probably the most obvious difference is that it consists in large part of erotic love poems.



Shir HaShirim is traditionally read on Passover. In this curriculum, Rabbi Richman takes a view (one voiced by a number of ancient commentators) that the Song of Songs is a love story between God and the Jewish people. She challenges us to look at the Maggid – the story we tell during the Seder – through the lens of Shir HaShirim. You may well find that this course leads you to look at Passover, the Song of Songs, and the Seder differently!

As with our first Project Zug group learning on the Machzor, this program will begin and end with a live (on Zoom) lecture by Rabbi Richman, and we will do group and *hevruta* study in between. Rabbi Richman's opening lecture is scheduled for Monday, March 1. We'll study together on Wednesdays: March 3, 10, and 17. Her final virtual lecture will be on Wednesday, March 24. All sessions will start at 7:30 p.m. If you can't attend one or both of the live virtual lectures, they will be recorded.

If you didn't register but would like to drop into a Project Zug class and see what it's like, contact Dale Rosenberg. Remember, we have unlimited access to the Project Zug catalog of courses for all of 5781. If you are interested in studying with Project Zug with a *hevruta* outside of these group courses, sign up for a class at www.projectzug.org. Do you have questions about how to enroll? Are you having difficulty choosing a course? Email Dale.Rosenberg@bethisraelworc.org or call 917 292-4552 for assistance.

JOIN BI FOR FUN AND LEARNING WITH MEMBERS TOGETHER PROGRAMS

On select Sunday mornings each month, we meet for a presentation, breakfast, and a chance to hang out with other BI members and their friends, all safely accomplished via Zoom. In February, Lidor David talked to us about Aging and Late Onset Maladies and Carol Goodman shared all about Hadassah's Youth Aliyah Program. We have some fascinating programs planned for the next few months. Here is some information on the March Members Together Meetings:

Martin Luther King and Abraham Joshua Heschel with Pat Bizzell

Sunday, March 7

Pat Bizzell will explore the relationship between Rabbi Heschel and the Reverend Dr. King, two activist clergymen who came from very different backgrounds, yet had a close connection.



Sustainability and the Torah with Noah Slovin

Sunday, March 14

What does the Torah tell us about sustainability and environmentalism that we can apply today? Join Noah Slovin to find out.



Join us at 9:00 a.m. on these Sundays, right after morning minyan. Bring coffee and breakfast, if you like. We'll have half an hour of schmoozing, breaking into smaller groups if there is a large turnout. Then at 9:30 our guest speakers will present, leaving time for Q&A at the end.

Do you have ideas for future Members Together programs? Email dale.rosenberg@bethisraelworc.org or call the BI office and let's set up a time to talk.

CELEBRATING HOLIDAYS WITH RIMON
DALE ROSENBERG, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND PROGRAMMING



Jewish holiday education is an essential component of Rimon Religious School's curriculum. Our community's children learn Jewish history, values, customs, and mitzvot as they learn about the holidays. In class we look at the textual and/or historical basis for each of the holidays and read and talk about mitzvot and customs for each. Whenever possible, we enact customs as part of the Rimon class. For some of our students this complements and supplements what they are doing at home. For others, in families where smaller holidays like Tu B'Shvat and Yom HaAtzmaut may not be celebrated at home, it's an opportunity to learn the meaning of the holiday and maybe start a new at home celebration.

COVID has, of course, affected Rimon holiday celebrations, as it has affected everything in our lives. We were not able to have a Purim carnival this year, but we did have a Purim party via Zoom. The students received packages with Purim crafts and other materials in advance. I told them the Purim story while rapidly switching masks among the major characters. While I did, students decorated crowns and masks for Purim costumes. We played Purim Bingo and Madlibs and the students tried a Create-a-Scene exercise where they decided how to position all the characters and objects in a key scene from the story told in Megillat Esther. We weren't able to meet in person, but we were able to learn and have fun!

In March we'll be learning about Pesach. Through a model seder, we'll experience some of the key moments of the Seder. And those who will be reading/singing the Four Questions will have a chance to practice those, too.

While children age 5-14 study holidays in Rimon Religious School, we have not forgotten families with younger children. Our Early Childhood Educator, Noam Rowan Mason, incorporates holiday themes into Tot Shabbat, aimed at families with children 7 and under. Twice a month Rowan leads Tot Shabbat on Friday afternoon Zooms, and when there is a holiday approaching, they incorporate holiday songs and stories into the session, setting a Shabbat mood along with a holiday experience. Similarly, on the other Fridays, they provide videos that teach songs or prayers, sometimes targeted at an upcoming holiday. Families can experience the anticipation of the holiday in the Tot Shabbat programs and videos.

Experiential learning in our holiday curriculum increases the interest and excitement in each Jewish holiday as it approaches. It also helps the students to better appreciate our hybrid existence as American Jews. We live on secular time, but we also live on Jewish time. We mark the seasons and the passage of time not only by what's happening outside or what is on the standard secular calendar. Our time is also subject to the ancient rhythms of the Jewish year that inspired our ancestors and still inspire us.





Be remembered forever by including Beth Israel in your estate plan (will, trust, retirement plan, or life insurance policy).

Beth Israel Legacy Circle, so far ...

Myra & Jay Aframe Howard and Susan Alfred Eizabeth & Joel Baker
Bernard Bailin Patricia Bizzell Lydia Borenstein
Eric Capellari Michelle Cochran David Cohen
Herbert Daroff Marlene Farbman Deborah Fins
Norman Glick Z'L Minna & Ira Gregerman
Peter Herman & Stefanie Bradie
Joel Kaufman & Carol Goodman Kaufman
Sharon & Elliott Krefetz Anna Krendel Benjamin & Cara Lyons
Judith Markowitz Deborah Martin Sondra Padow
Mary Jane Rein Toby Z'L & Chuck Richmond Ida Rotman Z'L
Merna & Edward Z'L Siff Bonnie & Richard Silver Ronald Silver
Richard Silverman Paula Sommer Steven & Denise Sosnoff
Dotty and Jerry Starr Morty Sreiberg Nina & Alan Stoll
Laura & Richard Traiger Dr. Sheila Trugman and Richard Rudnick
Selma & Irving White David Wilner
Steve & Judy Wolfe Sharon & Alan Yaffe
Anonymous (6)

**Thank you for your generous commitment to
our continuing success**

For more information:

<https://www.bethisraelworc.org/life--legacy.html#>

or contact: ecapellari9928@charter.net or

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danbshertzer@gmail.com or

stevesosnoff@gmail.com or stollam@aol.com

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, HARRIET STROGOFF



We at BI are delighted to wish a happy birthday to Harriet Strogoff, who celebrated her 100th birthday on Sunday, February 14!

A member of Beth Israel since 1948, Harriet worked for several years as a bookkeeper in the BI office; was active in Hadassah and Sisterhood, which she also served as Treasurer; and she regularly attended Shabbat morning services with her husband of 61 years, Judge Stanford Strogoff, who passed away in 2010. A graduate of Salem State Teachers College with a degree from their business program, Harriet worked for many years as a bookkeeper at The Owl Shop. She and Stan enjoyed summers on the Cape, cruises, and a wonderful trip to Israel. After retiring in 1983, Harriet had more time to pursue her varied interests, including rooting for the Red Sox and Patriots, knitting and needlepoint, cooking/baking (a lemon meringue pie to die for), mah jongg, reading, word jumbles, and crossword puzzles (which she still does daily!). Harriet has recently added jigsaw puzzles to her many hobbies.

Harriet's days are never complete without getting a detailed report on the activities of her son, daughter-in-law, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. We're all happy to hear that Harriet is doing so well and we wish her all the best.

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Phone: 508-756-6204; email office@bethisraelworc.org
Office Hours: Monday thru Friday 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.**

Our staff are now working on site as well as from home. As we continue to practice careful social distancing, the staff is available to you via email and phone. If you need to stop by in person, please call ahead. Do not hesitate to call if you need any information or need to get in touch with someone.

