

April 2015 12 Nisan - 11 Iyar 5775

A Magic Evening with Michael Swartz - page 27 Purim 2015 at KJCC - page 29 Pesach - page 35

Keys Jewish Community Center P.O. Box 1332 • Tavernier, FL 33070 • 305-852-5235 • keysjewishcenter.com April 2015

12 Nisan - 11 Iyar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2 Search for Chometz (evening)	3 Erev Pesach 6:30 Service Beth Hayden First seder in the evening	4 First Day of Passover KJCC Family Seder
5 Sisterhood Meeting 9:30 a.m.	6	7	8	9	10 Yizkor Service Bernie Ginsberg Jules and Nettie Seder	11 Eighth Day of Passover Rabbi Agler Service 10:00 a.m.
12 Board Meeting 9:00 a.m. "Sunflower" Discussion 7:00 p.m.	13	14	15	16 Yom Hashoah	17 Holocaust Committee Barbara & Richard Knowles Joel & Toby Bofshever Susan Ellner	18
19 "Treblinka's Last Witness" movie 7:00 p.m.	20	21	22	23 Yom HaAtzma'ut	24 Jonah, Randy and Oceana Gross 6:30 Service Gene & Mort Silverman	25
26 Theater outing for Spinoza play 2 p.m.	27	28	29	30		

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CHAI-LIGHTS is the monthly publication of the Keys Jewish Community Center P.O. Box 1332, Tavernier, Florida 33070 chailights@keysjewishcenter.com

President's Message Sam Vinicur

Virtually since I learned to read (my sister taught me when I was four), I have been sent into near paroxysms of joy by the power and nuance of words. (Yes, it's true: I reek of geek. I am an admitted and constantly relapsing word nerd.)

I've recently been studying a fascinating book by Rabbi Agler's friend Rabbi Stephen Wylen, titled "The Jews in the Time of Jesus." It wonderfully and gently guides us through the most tumultuous period in the reliaious beliefs (not day-to-day life, but arguably that. too) of Jews - the last decades of the Second Temple period and the first two or three centuries of the Common Era, after the Temple was destroyed and Rabbinic Judaism began. During that period there were many sects, whose adherents, we have discovered, were writing furiously. A lot of that literature has survived. It is catnip for scholars.

A popular style of the period, whose literature is occasionally represented in the Hebrew Bible (the Book of Daniel, late minor prophets), but mostly the Christian, is called Apocalyptic. That is what excited the word geek in me. To us, "apocalyptic" in common usage means an imminent, violent end to things, chaos leading to total destruction. Yet the word meant something else to the authors writing in that style; it origin-



nally meant "to uncover," or to "peek behind the curtain." So the "Apocalyptic" literary style, at least by the period's Jewish writers, wasn't intended to offer a scary foretaste of doom. It was meant to show a glimpse into heaven, to console the faithful living in a despairing time that God truly was there.

My idea here (yes, there really was one), was to give you a different kind of glimpse, of what goes on behind the curtains at a KJCC Board meeting, where your fellow members sit to decide KJCC policy. We all hear that other shuls' Board sessions are virtually armed combat: People scream, people stomp off, feelings are hurt, angry cabals are formed.

That doesn't happen at KICC Board meetings. We seldom agree on everything (which would be both boring and unproductive), but we're always civil to one another in our deliberations. We conduct a lot of business for a small shul, and make a lot of decisions. Sometimes discussions go on for a while. (Sorry, Skip.) But all of us care, there are no secret agendas, and we do our collective best to always protect the interests of the full membership.

I thought you might like to know this. You are a member of a truly special place. >



Saturday, April 4, 2015 6:30 pm

Islamorada Fishing Club

For information and reservations contact Erica Lieberman-Garrett hippiejap@hotmail.com, (305) 393-1162. Mail your check to KJCC Sisterhood at PO Box 116, Tavernier, FL 33070.

Your check is your reservation. Reserve early as we will be opening this to the public after March 22nd. Vegetarian options are available - please request when

making vour reservation.



Donations:

Members: Adults \$50; Children 12 and under are our guests. Non-Members: Adults \$75; Children 12 and under \$25

Nosh

The Beautiful Visitor in our Sanctuary

We now have a baby grand piano gracing the front left corner of the sanctuary, near the bemah. It belongs to the Florida Keys Concert Association, but has been relinquished to our care for the ten-plus months they do not need it. However, since we are its caretakers, it is not for general use. Joyce, as FLKCA Vice President and Sam, as President of KJCC, have guardianship. As of now, only Jules Seder, Erica Lieberman-Garrett, Beth Hayden and Dave Feder have permission to use it. It has already enriched our services, and we hope to put the piano to good use in the coming months.

Rabbi Agler Discusses "Sunflower"

On Sunday, April 12th at 7:00 p.m. Rabbi Richard Agler will be leading a discussion of Simon Wiesenthal's "Sunflower." The premise of the book is the dilemma of forgiveness in the face of unfathomable evil, something Wiesenthal faced as a prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp. Rabbi Agler asks that all who attend have read the book. KJCC has purchased six copies for its library. If you haven't already, now is the time to get reading. Sign out a copy and plan to join in the discussion.

News from the Garden

Our great thanks to Roger and Danna Levy, who have gifted KJCC with the new pergola Steve Steinbock is erecting right now in our Meditation Garden. At their request, we will be adding a plaque dedicating the new structure to both sets of their parents.

The open-lattice pergola, conceived by Steve to be a display of all types of orchids, should be completed in May. It will add another wonderful dimension to our burgeoning KJCC Garden. (Steve, by the way, is the newly elected president of the Florida Keys Orchid Society.) Special thanks to Greg LeNoir, master carpenter and cabinet maker (and Chai-Lights advertiser), who donated his time and expertise, all in memory of Carol, to make certain that the foundation of the pergola is level and strong. Yes, there will be opportunities to donate orchids, or to contribute toward those that will soon grace the new Levy-Miller pergola. Please see the ad on page 8.

Come and Sit in Comfort

By the time you read this, we will have replaced the old folding chairs in our Ruth Richardson Social Hall with new padded and supportive banquet chairs. Why? Because no one was really comfortable in the old chairs, and we want every aspect of your experience at KJCC to be as appealing as possible. Stimulating services? Check. Terrific programs? Check. Yummy food? Check. Great company and conversation? Double check. And now comfortable, quality chairs to sit on while you dine and schmooze. Who loves ya?

Department of Corrections

In the captions for *Tu B'Shvat* photos in the March issue, the holes for the new fruit trees were said to have been dug by Steve Steinbock. They were in fact dug by another one of our hardworking horticultural Steves, Steve Friedman.

For Those Who Ask What They Can Do...

Most of the plants in our Meditation Garden are native. They require little maintenance. (Water, sunlight, love.) But the grounds aren't maintenancefree. Steve is asking for bags of red mulch. Contact Steve (394-0143) or just leave them at the Garden.

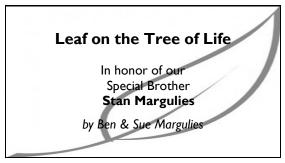
Oneg Sponsors for April 2015

April 3rd - Passover, no oneg this week.

- April 10th Jules and Nettie Seder in honor of their anniversary.
- April 17th Barbara and Richard Knowles to celebrate Richard's and Eve's birthdays. Joel and Toby Bofshever to commemorate Toby's birthday, and Susan Ellner to celebrate her birthday.
- April 24th Gene and Mort Silverman to celebrate their anniversary.

April Birthdays

l st	Bennet Beinfest
3rd	Justin L. Lebofsky
3rd	Harvey Kay
4th	Larry Weber
4th	Lauren Lane
4th	Thomas Brodie
9th	Gene Silverman
	David Feder
	Addison Greene-Barnett
10th	Abigail Everson
I 2th	Richard Knowles
13th	Samantha Lebofsky
	Shawn Borisoff
13th	Eve Knowles
l 5th	Toby Bofshever
l 6th	Dave VanArtsdalen
17th	Katie Greenman
17th	Susan Ellner
	Jennifer Garrett
18th	Lauren Sax
20th	Jonathan Nobil
22nd	Susan Temkin
22nd	Robin S. Denker
	Tiffany McNew
	Lynn Nobil
	Susan Gordon
25th	Shirley Stein
	Maryann Boruszak
27th	Elinor Grossman
28th	Joni Sages Dandrea
29th	David Goldfinger
29th	Linda Pollack
30th	Jason Sherman
30th	Rachel Barrett



April Anniversaries

	Years
3rd	Jules & Nettie Seder49
18th	Rick & Roberta McNew34
25th	Murray Rapoport & Barbara Osder19
30th	Jerrold & Roos-Mary Benowitz8
30th	Morton & Gene Silverman60

To see, to hear and to remember

On Sunday, April 19th, at 7 p.m. in the sanctuary, KICC will hold a free screening of the film "Treblinka's Last Witness." This remarkable story, a documentary film shown on Miami's WLRN last October, tells the story of how Samuel Willenberg, a Polish lew, became a forced laborer at Treblinka, while his two sisters were among 900,000 Jews sent to their deaths there. He later escaped during a camp revolt, one of barely 100 lews to survive the Nazis' most efficient death camp. He made it his life's mission to tell of the horrors he witnessed there. Unlike other Nazi concentration camps such as Auschwitz, Dachau and Buchenwald, where efforts have been made to educate visitors, the Treblinka site has been left largely untouched after the Nazis demolished it near the end of the war in a desperate effort to cover up their deeds.

—Joyce

Two More Dates with Rabbi Agler

Ritual Committee is happy to announce two more opportunities for Shabbat morning services and Torah study with Rabbi Agler. The teaching style is informal and each service memorable. Save the dates: April 11th and May 9th. These will be the last two Shabbat morning study sessions with Rabbi Agler until after the Jewish New Year (about six months from now). They are too good, too engaging, stimulating, uplifting and informative to be missed. Come participate and be enriched. Each service begins at 10:00 a.m. and ends around noon, followed by light kiddush refreshment. —*Gloria*

A Play About Spinoza's Excommunication Trial

We have secured a block of fourteen seats for the Sunday, April 26th 2 p.m. matinee of this riveting

play about a Jew from Amsterdam who became an important figure in the dawning of the modern age. The New York Times called it "an engrossing primer on Spinoza's radical thinking, presented in the classic style of a courtroom drama."

NYTheatre.Com wrote that New Jerusalem is "A richly intellectual work of theatre that will stimulate all sorts of curiosities about the most fundamental questions facing humanity. What nobler purpose for the stage exists?"

The group price is \$40, rather than the list price of \$52. This is not a fund-raising event, but rather an extension of our



Adult Education program, and an opportunity to stretch our minds and enjoy the company of friends. Contact Joyce Peckman at 305-451-0665 to reserve your spot or arrange for carpooling.

Ongoing Projects and Mitzvah Programs of KJCC

SUNSHINE COMMITTEE: If you know of any member who should receive a get well, congratulations or condolence card from the KJCC, call Gene Silverman, 305-664-3316.

CEMETERY INFORMATION: If you wish to plan for the very distant future, you can reserve space at the Kendall Mt. Nebo Cemetery in the KJCC section. Call Bernie Ginsberg, 305-852-9300.

MEDITATION GARDEN: Have you visited our beautiful garden? Call Steve Steinbock, 305-394-0143, to reserve a bench, brick or tree plaque for posterity.

PICTURE POSTCARDS: We have beautiful picture postcards in the KJCC Gift Shop bearing the Millard Wells representation of the KJCC which was commissioned by Sisterhood. They can be packaged to fit your needs and mailed to you or your gift recipient. The price is \$36 per hundred but we will sell lesser quantities. Contact Susan Gordon, 305-766-3585.

ONEG SHABBAT SPONSOR: To schedule your special date with Sisterhood, call Joyce Peckman, 305-451-0665.

KJCC TREE OF LIFE LEAVES and ROCKS, SANCTUARY SEAT PLATES, YARTZEIT MEMORIAL PLAQUES: Call Dave Mont, 305-393-9883, to arrange your donation.

KJCC BOOKPLATES for siddurim: Call Linda Pollack, 305-852-8575 for information.

JNF TREES IN ISRAEL: A gift of a tree, or two or more, makes a long remembered way to honor a loved one, a relative, a friend or an occasion. Both Israel and the KJCC benefit. Call Linda Pollack 305-852-8575.

CHAI-LIGHTS MITZVAH: Place a greeting or notice in Chai-Lights. Call Linda Pollack, 305-852-8575, to make your donation.

ADVERTISEMENT IN CHAI-LIGHTS or DIRECTORY: Your business ad will appear in every issue of Chai-Lights. Call Linda Pollack, 305-852-8575, for annual rates.

LIVE GREEN – RECYCLE: We are recycling ink cartridges, laser toners, cell phones, laptops, idevices, tablets and more. Call Steve Steinbock, 305-394-0143, or just bring your items to the KJCC.

Call the names listed above for assistance or send your request and check to the KJCC, P.O. Box 1332, Tavernier, FL 33070. Recipients of your gifts will be notified by card and listings will appear in Chai-Lights as well. Honorarium and memorial cards can also be requested. Donations can be earmarked to our various ongoing funds; e.g. Holocaust Education Fund, Meditation Garden, Rabbi & Cantor Fund, Scholarship Fund, Sara Cohen Memorial Tzedukah Fund, Sunshine Fund, or General Fund.

Our extended brick walkway is in place. Come and spend some time walking around our peaceful and beautiful Meditation Garden.

Plans are under way for a new pergola which will house our new KJCC Orchid Garden.

We invite you to become a part of this fresh undertaking. Make your donation toward a new and beautiful orchid. The orchid will be tagged with the name of the donor and the name of the person being honored or remembered.

Suggested donation is 2 tiered:

\$ 65 - Your orchid will be tagged with the name of the donor and the name of the person being honored or remembered.

\$ Other - Specific amount is not required if you want to be part of creating such beauty and serenity but do not want to tag.

Many thanks to Steve Steinbock, KJCC's Inspired Gardener, who conceived of this living, creative project and will be facilititating it as its loving steward.

Tn Memoriam April 2015

In Memory Of

In Memory Of

In Memory Of

Clara Bloom

By Marc & Ellen Bloom

In Memory Of

Audrey Pearlman

By William & Donna Bolton

Nat Feldblum

By Marc & Ellen Bloom

In Memory Of

Baruch Epstein

By Joan Boruszak

lean Blumenfeld

By Marvin & Ivy Blumenfeld

In Memory Of

Joseph T. Cline

By Meredith A. Cline

In Memory Of

Frances Wolfe

By Michael & Suzanne Gilson

In Memory Of

Ellen Coltman

By Barnet O. Coltman

In Memory Of

In Memory Of

Mark Hitzig

By Wes & Rita Conklin

In Memory Of

Bill Gordon

By Susan Gordon

In Memory Of

Stella Hartz

By Steven & Jan Hartz

In Memory Of

Nathan Klein

By Harvey & Judith Klein

In Memory Of

George Nobil

By Lynn Nobil Marty Graham

By Mrs. Marty Graham

In Memory Of

Michael Janowitz

By Sam & Leslie Janowitz

In Memory Of

Fred Klimpl

By Michael Klimpl

In Memory Of

Erwin Moss

By Joel & Linda Pollack

In Memory Of Sylvia Grossman

By Kenneth & Jerri Grossman

In Memory Of

Gertrude F. Kaplan

By Marshall & Myra Kaplan

In Memory Of

Marilyn Janet Barr

By Michael Klimpl

In Memory Of

Benjamin A. Savage

By Marjorie Present

Chai-Lights April 2015 9

Sn Memoriam April 2015

In Memory Of

In Memory Of
Louise Folks Baker

By Joseph & Susan Sachs

In Memory Of

Richard Schulberg

By Alan & Elaine Schulberg

Rabbi Milton Greenwald

By Paul & Susan Roberts

In Memory Of

Dolores Feldman

By Jeffrey & Patty Schocket

In Memory Of

Ginger Lewis

By Robert Silk

~~~~~~~~~~

Louis S. Smith

In Memory Of

By Steven & Barbara Smith

In Memory Of

**Charles Kram** 

In Memory Of

Ida Tallent

By Lillian Tallent

In Memory Of

**Irwin Cutler** 

By Donald Zinner

In Memory Of

#### Sam Sax

By Stuart & Lauren Sax

In Memory Of

#### Sally Shabathai

By Joseph & Katherine Shabathai

By Sanford & Nancy Yankow

In Memory Of
David Wernicoff

By Donald Zinnor

By Donald Zinner

In Memory Of

#### **Cantor Alex Chapin**

By Steven & Barbara Smith

In Memory Of

#### Hilda Mazur

By Sanford & Nancy Yankow

#### **Mishebeyrach List**

For those of you who might not make it to services regularly, each week we read aloud the names of those we know to be ailing so that we may include their names in a special supplication to G-d to heal them. Our printed list is read, and then the leader asks if anyone in the congregation has names to add.

If you can't be at services, and would like someone you care about to be included in the mishebeyrach prayer, call or e-mail and let us know. We'll happily include any name (or names) you tell us about. The main KICC number is 305-852-5235. The website, which accepts e-mail, is keysjewishcenter.com. Or send your request to Joyce Peckman at joycepeckman@gmail.com.

### Sisterhood Erica Lieberman-Garrett

he season continues with a full calendar of activities at the KICC Sisterhood. We ended February with the Sisterhood Shabbat service. It was wonderful, from the sound of the beautiful piano to the chanting and singing of our prayers. Anyone who attended would tell you that the feeling of joy, connection, and spiritual uplift radiated throughout the sanctuary. Susan Ellner confronted her "bimah shpilkes" (as Medina puts it) and did a lovely job on the *parsha*, mentioning her Russian ancestors, and connecting all of us to her special moment. Her Bubbe and Zayde would have been proud, as we all were. These evenings are what makes our "little shul in the Kevs" so unique. We are small but we are evolving, and our new and exciting programs continue our connection to a deeper celebration of Shabbat. like we had at our March 13th dinner as we celebrated Shabbat Across America/Canada, a national program which united us with over 450 congregations and thousands of fellow Jews. (Actually, Mexico was included, too, as was New Zealand: it may soon be Shabbat Across the World!) After a delicious dairy buffet, including Linda Perloff's scrumptious minicheesecakes, we all enjoyed a beautiful evening service of music and soulful Shabbat songs and blessings. Once again I thank all the women of Sisterhood who prepared their delicious specialties and made the evening as delectable as alwavs.

We enjoyed getting together outside of the shul as well, as we formed and glazed our pottery at Beth Kaminstein's studio in Islamorada. My group watched the sunset and the moon come up over the ocean. Having the opportunity to share time together and just enjoy each other's company, while preparing for our Women's Seder, is always a highlight for me each year. Sylvie bringing some wine to the event even helps the pottery look a bit better!!

On March 22<sup>nd</sup> we celebrated our twelfth

annual Women's Seder. As always, the service was unique, the wine flowed, the food was absolutely scrumptious, and much of the pottery looked like we were having show-and-tell for a kindergarten class, except of course for Beth's and Medina's. Once again, this year the proceeds from the Seder will be dispersed in our community as *tikkun olam*, and we are proud and excited to help each year this way.

This year our honoree was Carol Steinbock. It was a very special and moving dedication and celebration of her life and the connections she had to the Sisterhood and to the KICC. The women of Sisterhood dearly miss her. We had invited Steve Steinbock to be there, and he was moved and honored to accept the award in Carol's memory. Her name will be added to the beautiful guilted banner that, thanks to Marcia Kreitman and others, hangs prominently in the KJCC hallway. I would like to thank all the women who attended and prepared all the delicious food and seder plate items, as well as Beth Kaminstein for her generosity, hospitality and never -ending encouragement for our pottery.

The Family Seder will be held at the Islamorada Fishing Club on Saturday April 4<sup>th</sup>. As always, it will be a lovely dinner led by our seder team, and a chance to relax outside of the shul and let others do all the cooking and cleaning. We hope to see you there.

Our next Sisterhood meeting will be on Sunday April 5<sup>th</sup>. We will finish off the season strong with some *matzo brei* breakfast, and talk about a good summer diet cleanse and our plans for the next few months. As the snowbirds start to head north and the summer heat begins, I wish for all of you a wonderful *Pesach*, wherever you may be.  $\Diamond$ 

# **Contributions to KJCC**

We appreciate the thoughtfulness of those who support the Keys Jewish Community Center by remembering and honoring their friends and loved ones through their generous contributions. All donations made after the fifth of the month will appear in the following month's Chai-Lights. When you make a donation, please signify the fund it is to go to and the recognition of the name or names to be listed.

**Chai-Lights** Kirschenbaum, Bianka

Book Plates Honor of Swartz, George & Muriel Toby & David Goldfinger (2)

Coltman, Barney

**General Fund** Cole, Ronald Ruthen, Melvin & Joyce Schur, Lee

Foley, Robert Pollack, Joel & Linda Rapp, Marilyn

Meditation Garden Avner, Gloria

**Scholarship Fund** Gitin, David & Gloria Avner Memory of Eve L. Greenstein

Honor of love offering Pauline Roller getting better Sisterhood Shabbat

**Memory of** Bob Singer, Kenny Temkin Susan Schwaid Russ Rolnick

> Honor of tree - David Gitin

> > Honor of Bar Mitzvah of Jonah Gross

Sisterhood Oneg Fund Friedman, Steve & Jane Schur, Lee Seder, Jules & Nettie Williams, Rita

Peckman, Joyce

Yahrzeits Kaplan, Marshall & Myra

Lieberman-Garrett, Erica Margulies, Stanley & Jenny Sheinker, Miltra Tallent, Lillian Temkin, Robert

Yahrzeit Plaques Schwaid, Steve Honor of Jane's birthday Lee's birthday 49th anniversary lim's birthday

> Memory of Dorothy Ross

Memory of Monroe Kaplan, Luba Tuchman Sam Lieberman Joshua ben Saul H'levi Warren J. Sheinker Ida Tallent Anne Temkin

> Memory of Susan Schwaid

#### How Certain Contributions to KJCC Can Instantly Become Permanent, Living Memorials

Book Plates: We are, after all, the People of the Book. For \$36 an inscription of your choice will be placed in one of our Siddurim or Tanakhs. An example: "In Loving Memory of my grandfather, who first taught me about the treasures that lie between these covers." *Tree of Life Leaves*: We have three beautiful, six-foot Trees of Life — the world's most enduring spiritual metaphor — adorning the wall at the rear of the KJCC sanctuary. For \$75 an individual, golden leaf can be engraved with your message of memory or love. An example: "To our grandchildren: May they always be in the presence of the Eternal Light."

*Garden Bricks*: \$125 buys a single brick and \$200 a double brick in our magnificent Meditation Garden walkway, engraved with your personal message. An example: "You were the best, Aunt Goldie. Well, you and those amazing cheese blintzes." For \$300 we'll plant the native tree of your choice as the ultimate living tribute; an outdoor plaque is included in the price.

# YEDA VETORASHA



#### Yardena Kamely

## Jews in Egypt – A Complex History

 $\mathbf{\Gamma}$  ach year we celebrate *Pesach* (Passover), the story of the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, the deliverance of the Jewish people from slavery. Avadim havinu b'Mitzravim. achshav B'nei Chorin. (Which translates as "we were slaves in Egypt, now we are a free people.") Our relationship to Egypt has a long history. In Biblical times the Israelites sought refuge in Egypt in times of distress - to escape famine in Eretz Yisrael during the time of Joseph or later for political reasons during Hellenized Greek rule, or during times of war and persecution. (And we had many wars in our history.) A large number of Jews took refuge in Egypt after the destruction of the Kingdom of Judah in 586 BCE, and after the assassination (by Jews) of the Jewish governor, Gedaliah, who had been appointed by the victorious Babylonian king. The Prophet Jeremiah was carried along by Judeans fleeing to Egypt, where he probably spent the rest of his life.

By the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, Jews were found in many Egyptian towns and cities. They say that there was no more illustrious Jewish community in the history of the Diaspora than in Egypt. The Egyptian Jews were the first to translate the Bible into a foreign language, the Greek Septuagint, and Jewish philosophy, inspired by the Greek, had its beginnings in Alexandria. In fact, Alexandria, which became under Greek (Ptolemaic) rule the most learned and cultured city in all the Greek empire, almost had a majority lewish population. It was the home of Philo, the prolific Hellenized lewish writer who lived about the same time as lesus and who was the source, along with Josephus, of much of the

non-rabbinic Jewish writings of the period.

The Golden Age of Egyptian Jewry came to an end in the third and final revolt against the Romans (115-17 C.E.). The community recovered slowly, but did flourish again. It was strong from the time of the Fatamid (Islamic Empire) conquest in 969 until the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century, when the Mamelukes took power and Jewish community life declined. Those centuries, well documented in the Cairo *Geniza*, include the age of Maimonides, who came to Equpt from Spain and was THE leader of the Jewish community in his time. (He was also personal physician to Saladin, the great leader, warrior and patron of learning who had deposed the Fatamids in 1171 and in 1189 decisively defeated the European marauders of the Third Crusade, led in part by Richard The Lion-Heart of England.)

The Ottoman Empire (from Turkey) conquered Egypt in 1517. Around this time, groups of Spanish Jews exiled from Spain reached Egypt. Urbanized, highly educated and successful, they integrated well into Egypt and its society. They revived the cultural and religious life of the lewish community. They brought with them their very rich Sephardic culture and soon dominated the old communities. The community then divided into three sub-communities: the Musta'arbin (the indigenous Arab-speaking Jews), the Sephardim (exiles from Spain), and the Mograbim (settlers from North Africa). This type of division in the lewish community had occurred before in Egypt, when the division was between those who followed the Babylonian Yeshivot (rabbinic schools) and those who followed the Yeshivot of Eretz Yisrael.

As Egypt later declined with the rest of the Ottoman Empire, so did the life of its Jewish community. When the distinguished 19<sup>th</sup> century Egyptian ruler Muhammad Ali (1805-1848) initiated a series of modernizing re-

forms, the prosperity he brought to Egypt also led to growth in the Jewish population. Many Jews came from European countries, particularly Sephardim from the Balkans. where they had settled after the expulsion from Spain in 1492. This meant even more influence from the Sephardic culture. Modern schools were established. The lew-



Rabbi Moshe Cohen with his choir in the Samuel Menashe synagogue in Alexandria, Egypt.

ish community had long been centered in Cairo, but from the 19<sup>th</sup> century on, Alexandria once again became the center of Jewish life. By 1897, nearly ten thousand Jews lived in Alexandria. Ashkenazim came from Europe, too. Alexandria's Rabbinate was modern and emphasized western as well as traditional education.

The Balkan wars and WWI brought more Jews to Egypt, especially from Salonika, the Greek city that was the center of the Sephardim in the Balkans, and other Ottoman towns. During WWI, many Jews from Eretz Israel, expelled by the Turks in their last gasp of rule, found temporary refuge in Egypt. A Jewish press developed in three languages: Arabic, Judesmo (the language of the Sephardic Jews), and French. In 1937 the census showed 63,550 Jews in Egypt. Sephardim entered public life, as they long had in other Muslim countries. Zionist organizations were also established. The highly educated, worldly Sephardim were able to use all their talent. expertise and experience, from many generations as traders, financiers, political administrators and advisors, diplomats, scholars and community leaders.

Life for Jews in Egypt became difficult with the rise of Egyptian nationalism. Anti-Jewish riots were organized in Cairo as early as

> 1945. In 1947, the eve of the establishment of the State of Israel, Egypt's parliament passed the "Companies Law." which required not less than 75 percent of employees of Egyptian companies to be Egyptian citizens. Since only 20 percent of the Jews in Eavpt were citizens (most retained the passports of the European country they came from, or were stateless), this was a hard blow for

the Jewish community.

The day the State of Israel was declared. Jews couldn't leave Egypt without a special permit and their leaders were arrested. There were riots in Jewish neighborhoods and the Jews began to lose the privileges they had had in better times. But between 1950 and 1954 the restrictions were eased and many of the Sephardim were able to move to Israel. The final period in the history of Egyptian Jewry began with the Sinai Campaign in 1956. Hundreds of lews were arrested and thousands were ordered to leave the country in a matter of days, abandoning all their property, which they had to give to the government. Some 8,000 left and scattered throughout the world - to Brazil, France, the U.S., Argentina, Great Britain and to Israel. By 1970, few of the original Jewish communities remained in Egypt.

In my next article I will write about the history of the Sephardim who emigrated to South America. I lived there for a long time and will tell about my experience in the Jewish community of Chile and Argentina.  $\diamond$ 

### World Jewish Report Medina Roy

#### An Accidental Discovery

A group of amateur Israeli divers has stumbled upon the largest collection of medieval gold coins ever found in the country. The coins date back to the 11<sup>th</sup> century and likely come from a shipwreck in the Mediterranean Sea. The discovery was made in early February near the Israeli port city of Caesarea. According to the Israel Antiquities Authority, the cache consists of some 2,000 coins, which were most likely unearthed in recent storms. The coins provide rare historical evidence from the Fatimid dynasty in the 10th and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. (The Fatimids ruled Northern Africa and Palestine. based in the new city of Cairo, from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. They were overthrown by Saladin, one of the great figures of Mideast history, whose personal physician was none other than Maimonides.) Kobi Sharvit. director of the Antiauities Authority's marine archeology unit, said that the coins either came from a boat that sank on its way to deliver tax money to the central government in Egypt or to pay the salaries of soldiers in the Fatimid garrison stationed in Caesarea. Still another possibility is that the coins came from a merchant ship trading among Mediterranean coastal cities. Most of the coins belonged to the Caliph Al-Hakim, who ruled from 996-1021, and to his son, Al-Zahir (1021-1036). The earliest coin found was a guarter dinar minted in Palermo, Sicily, in the second half of the 9th century. The coins did not require any cleaning or preservation in the lab despite having been at the bottom of the sea for about a millennium. (www.washinatonpost.com, 2-18-15)

#### It'll Be the Last Batch

This past December, *Streit's*, the last family-owned matzah company in the United States, announced that it would be permanently closing its 90-year-old New York City factory after this Passover season because of long-standing mechanical problems and economic concerns. Sometime in April, the company will move its matzah production either to its other factory in northern New Jersey or to another non-Manhattan location. The current location is a long-time lewish fixture in the heart of Manhattan's Lower East Side, once home to one of the highest concentration of lews in the country. In recent years, the neighborhood has seen its real estate values skyrocket. "We should've been out of here five or ten years ago," said Alan Adler, 63, who oversees the company's day-to-day operations. "But we feel committed to the men [who work here] and ...to the neighborhood, so we tried to keep this place afloat as long as we could." Nearly all of the factory's equipment is more than 70 years old. The ovens date back to the 1930s and are about 25 percent slower than they used to be. (This slower pace decreases matzah output and affects the product's flavor.) Adler claims he cannot find a mechanic willing to fix them. (The Forward, 2-25-15)

#### A First for Rwanda

In early February, *Gigawatt Global*, an American-owned Dutch company with an Israeli research and development team, inaugurated East Africa's first solar energy field, in Rwanda. The field's 28,360 photovoltaic panels provide six percent of Rwanda's power supply. It is expected to harness the sun's light for the next 25 years. Yosef Abramowitz, an American-Israeli, co-founded the company. He is also the co-founder of the *Arava Power Company*, the firm responsible for Israel's first commercial-scale solar field. *Gigawatt Global* is located on the grounds of Chai-Lights April 2015 **15** 



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the Agahozo-Shalom Youth Village, which houses and educates students orphaned from the Rwandan genocide. Jewish South African-American attorney and philanthropist Anne Heyman, who died in a horse-riding accident in 2014, established the village in 2008. The *Gigawatt Global* field is the first project to be grid-connected within the United States' *Power Africa* initiative launched by President Obama in 2013. (www.jpost.com, 2-6-15)

#### Prayer on Temple Mount is Now "Kosher"

A precedent-setting ruling was recently issued by Israel's Magistrates' Court in the case of Yehuda Glick vs. The Israeli Police. The judge criticized the lack of a clear policy concerning Jewish visits and prayer on the Temple Mount and ruled that the police must ensure that lews be able to pray at the site. Glick was banned from praying at the Temple Mount from 2011 to 2013. Since capturing the holy site during the Six-Day War in 1967, Israel has severely restricted access for Jewish worshipers, in part not to inflame tensions between Israelis and Palestinians who also consider the site holy. Glick heads a group of lewish activists fighting for wider lewish access to the Temple Mount. In October he was wounded in an attempted assassination by a Palestinian gunman.

(www.israelnationalnews.com, 3-3-15)

#### The Birth of the Israeli Air Force

A new documentary, "Above and Beyond," tells the story about the birth of the Israeli Air Force. The film focuses on a small group of mostly American, mostly secular Jews, who risked everything to sneak aircraft into the newly founded State of Israel - and then fly those planes on missions against the armies of five Arab nations. The Americans. determined to rush to Israel's aid, bought old military planes and smuggled them out of the U.S. They searched military records for pilots with Jewish-sounding names and formed a bogus Panamanian airline, all this despite hostility from the Truman administration, which threatened the American citizenship of anyone who joined Israel's cause. The film features interviews with surviving pilots,

among them Milton Rubenfeld – father of entertainer Paul Reubens (better known as Pee-Wee Herman) – and Harold Livingston, who wrote "Star Trek: The Motion Picture." Rubenfeld was shot down. Worried because he spoke no Hebrew and thought he might be mistaken for an Arab, he shouted at Israeli soldiers "Shabbos!" and "Gefilte Fish!" The film's executive producer is Nancy Spielberg – Steven's sister. Her credentials are impressive: she served as a consultant on the Oscarwinning documentary, "Chernobyl Heart" and executive-produced "Elusive Justice, The Search For Nazi War Criminals (www.nypost.com, 1-28-15)

#### It Only Took 43 Years

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) will finally build a place at the 2016 Olympic Village in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where people can pay respects to athletes who have died at the Olympic games. The closing ceremony will feature a moment of reflection to remember them. The decision is seen an as attempt to appease critics of the IOC who believe that the committee has done little to memorialize the eleven Israeli athletes taken hostage and then killed by the Palestinian terrorist group *Black September* at the 1972 Munich Olympics. That year, the games were suspended for a day before resuming. At the London Games in 2012, the IOC rejected an appeal by the widows of two of the Israelis killed at Munich along with a petition signed by more than 100,000 people for a moment of silence at the opening ceremonies. It was the 40th anniversary of the tragedy. The IOC has repeatedly rejected calls by family members of the murdered athletes as well as from the Israeli government for such a moment of silence. (www.ita.ora, 3-2-15)

#### In Memoriam

• Carl Djerassi, eminent chemist who 63 years ago helped invent the birth control pill, died at the end of January. He was 91. Djerassi was born in Vienna. His parents were both physicians and divorced when he was six. In 1938, when Nazi Germany annexed Austria and 70,000 Austrian Jews and Communists were quickly rounded up, the elder Djerassi remarried his wife in order to take her and their son out of the country. The marriage was soon annulled. The boy and his mother made their way to America in 1939. They arrived penniless, losing their last \$20 to a swindling New York cab driver. Soon afterward, the young boy wrote to Eleanor Roosevelt, asking her for help. She interceded and provided him with a college scholarship, which led him on a journey of scientific achievement. Mother and son settled in upstate New York.

Dierassi came to be known as the very definition of a Renaissance man. He was a pioneering biomedical entrepreneur, obtaining a patent for Pyribenzamine, the first commercial antihistamine. He founded Zoecon. a company that developed environmentally friendly pest control. He wrote poetry, plays and novels and authored 1,200 scientific articles. He taught at universities for five decades, collected important art (particularly the paintings of Paul Klee, the Swiss Expressionist), started a cattle ranch and established an artists' residency program in California. Letty Cottin Pogrebin, a founding editor of Ms. Magazine, said that Djerassi deserves to be best remembered for the birth control pill, which "arguably gave women more freedom than the Declaration of Independence," even though he was only one of many scientists working for decades who pioneered the chemical basis of what would later become the pill. (For a long time, scientists knew that high levels of estrogen and progesterone inhibited ovulation. But synthesizing them had proved expensive and ineffective for use as oral contraceptives. The synthesis by Djerassi and two other colleagues turned out to be both economical and effective for oral use and all three names went on the patent.) Dierassi received 34 honorary doctorates, numerous professional and government awards including the National Medal of Science (chemistry), the nation's highest science honor, presented by President Nixon in 1973. and the National Medal of Technology and Innovation, the nation's highest technology

award, presented by President George H. W. Bush in 1991. (*www.nytimes.com*, 1-31-15 and *Time Magazine*, 2-16-15)

 Leonard Nimov, who starred as Mr. Spock - the half-human, half-Vulcan first officer aboard the starship Enterprise in the Star Trek television series and movies - died recently at 83. Nimoy grew up in the West End of Boston, the son of Yiddish-speaking immigrants from Ukraine. The Nimoy household kept kosher and was "flexibly Orthodox." His father was a partner in a barbershop and, since Saturday was their busiest day, he went to work. Leonard began acting at the age of eight, to his father's displeasure; the elder Nimoy was steadfast in saying that he hadn't come all the way from Ukraine to see his son waste his life as an actor. In the early 1950s - inspired by the rebirth of the Jewish state - Leonard considered making aliyah to Israel to join Habimah, Israel's national theater. But because the language barrier would be a major handicap, he dropped the idea and headed to Hollywood. There he was one of the few Yiddish-speaking actors and played minor roles whenever a Yiddish theater troupe came to town. In 1965 he was cast as Spock in what would become a cult phenomenon. Though not a particularly religious man, Nimoy has said that "everything I do is informed by my Judaism. A lot of what I've put into Spock came to me through my Jewish orientation." For example, Nimoy modeled the Vulcan hand greeting accompanied by the iconic phrase "Live long and prosper," after the gesture seen in Orthodox synagogues when the *kohanim* (priestly class) bless the congregation. Nimoy was also a respected film director, acting teacher and author of three volumes of poetry illustrated with his own photographs. He recorded ten narrative albums. He starred on Broadway in "Equus," and as actor, director and producer of "Vincent," about the artist Vincent van Gogh. He derived great satisfaction from playing Tevya in "Fiddler on the Roof" during an eight-week run because it allowed his parents to see their son as an actor for the first time since leaving home. (www.ita.ora, 3-2-15) >



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# **Photo Gallery**



We had some familiar faces come back to visit KJCC in late February.

At top right is Joan Boruszak; at above left is Nissan Mayk, and just above is our beloved past-president Bea Graham, now living with daughter Nissan in New Jer-

sey. (The selfie monster, as you see, was Marc Bloom.) In the center (naturally) are Bea's granddaughter Shyella with son Negev, posing happily in the KJCC sanctuary during the same Mayk family visit.





Left and above, Lee Schur's grandson Michael Schur proposed to girlfriend Felice Watts at the Art Institute of Chicago in front of her favorite painting, George Seurat's "Sunday in the Park." As you see, she apparently said yes.



On February 26th, a group of KJCCers, as guests of Kathy Shabathai (an F.I.U. religious studies alumna), went to F.I.U. to hear renowned Dead Sea Scrolls scholar Lawrence Schiffman, probably the world's most respected Jewish Scrolls expert.

Professor Tudor Parfitt, who in a few weeks was to speak at KJCC, joined us for dinner and conversation. The photo above represents two of today's greatest scholars of Jewish history and religion.





All of Sisterhood led the early service on Friday, February 27th. As you can see, standing side by side they stretched across the entire bemah. For those of you wondering where fif-



teen Men's Club members are in a comparable photo leading a comparable service, they'd ask you how your garden was doing, or how goes your attempt to ride your bicycle backward around the world. In other words, when pigs wear yarmulkas. Photos continue next page...





Some photos from Rabbi Richard Agler's Saturday morning Torah Learning Service on February 28th. Friend of KJCC and occasional visitor Arthur Plutzer from New York was here, so he joined Rabbi Agler and Past-President George Swartz on the bemah. Which meant quite the learned trio up there reading from the Torah.







Some photos from a March 1st Cleveland Orchestra string quartet concert at the Goldfinger home in honor of Toby's birthday.



The photo below was taken at this year's Yardena Kamely lecture series. The topic of the three-part lecture was the complex migration of Sephardic Jews after their 1492 expulsion from Spain.





#### **Passover Preparation at KJCC Religious School**

What a great day our students had at Sunday School just before spring break. Excitement and achievement were the watchwords of the day. New tutor (and graduated student) Westley Silverman did a fine job working with both Fink boys. Susan Gordon, Official KJCC Zadie Bernie Ginsberg and KJCC Music Director Jules Seder taught the Four Questions and Passover songs to the students with gusto. And in a grand finale, Savta Nettie Seder taught our students a skill that will



bring them and their families pleasure forever – how to make dark chocolate matzoh bark with candy sprinkles.

—Gloria





We had a shul full of interested members and guests, some of whom we seldom see at KJCC, who came to hear this distinguished historian and adventurer recount some of his experiences in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Papua New Guinea.

This was to be the last in this year's series of educational and cultural evenings at KJCC, and Professor Tudor Parfitt is so well known from his books and field work and documentaries on the BBC, PBS and The History Channel that we'd invited the entire Upper Keys community to join us. The evening began with friends from many parts



of the Upper Keys community greeting each other, and ended with a lovely collation in the social hall. In between Dr. Parfitt regaled us with stories. It's no surprise that the European media has dubbed him "the British Indiana Iones."





This was too cute not to send. I thought about doing a crop, but then I saw Adara's cold toes. (I wonder if they ever found the sock?) Big sister Libby is doing her grin for the camera, and the usually happy Isaac looks like he is ready to check-out (at right). - Savta Joyce



Above, Joel and Toby Bofshever, who live in Davie, met Steve Steinbock and the Keys Garden Club on the club's outing to Flamingo Gardens in Broward County.



At left, Elinor Grossman, Susan Gordon, Carol Laskin and Joan Stark at Beth Kaminstein's pottery studio preparing their own items for the Women's Seder. Beth had told all the women to



Above, Joyce Peckman, Muriel Swartz and Gloria Avner get ready to fire their pottery creations being made for the March 22nd Women's Seder.

"create a vessel that would capture their memories of Passover." Below, another group including Mikaela Bitton, Barbara Bernstein, Leslie Janowitz, Erica Lieberman-Garrett, Sylvie Coeurjoly, Meredith Cline and Medina Roy.







Tallit, Kipot, Kiddush Cups, Candlesticks Mezuzzot, Jewelry and More!

> For further information contact: Susan Gordon (305) 766-3585

# A Night of Magic with Professor Michael Swartz

It was a discussion of a part of our history few know well, of amulets and spells and potions and inducing the reticent to fall in love with you. Late Antiquity Jewish Europe, it's being revealed, was far more than just a descent into darkness.

#### by Gloria Avner and Joyce Peckman

JCC stalwarts, members we hadn't seen in a long time, and a good sampling of the greater Upper Keys community filled our sanctuary on Sunday Night, February 22nd, to hear Ohio State University Professor and author Michael Swartz talk about "Jewish Magic." It was the first program in our Jewish Enrichment Series to use the new audio-visual

equipment and excitement was in the air. We heard more fascinating material from the lively Talmudic and early medieval period than we could wrap our minds around. Formulas for calling on angels and demons, amulets designed for healing and attracting love, incantations for protection inscribed on "hamsas" (stylized hands) and on the inside



This bowl, found buried upside-down in the ruins of a modest Jewish home in late Antiquity central Europe, has chants and spells and prayers, all hand-inscribed in Hebrew, probably seeking protection and God's watchful eye.



of clay bowls for purposes of protection – these topics barely skim the surface of Dr. Swartz's well-illustrated, fascinating talk and the question/ answer period. Look at the artistry and bold inscriptions on these bowls unearthed by archaeologists from 3<sup>rd</sup> century Jewish homes. The bowls were found buried upside down beneath doorways. (Echoes of lamb's blood painted on doorways to keep the Angel of Death away just before the Exodus?) The



inscriptions were most likely meant to keep evil away, to insure health and safety of the family within, and above all to insure healthy childbirth. There is no question about the power of the primitive art. If you missed the



Some post-lecture photos: below, Rabbi Richard Agler responding to a new addition to Bernie's joke repertoire. Below left, George and Michael Swartz in discussion with Bernie. At bottom, Michael, George and Muriel Swartz together with the team from Education and Ritual — Gloria, Joyce, Yardena and Susan who made the evening possible.

talk, read one of Dr. Swartz's books or read the historical novel he recommends by Maggie Anton, *Rav Hisda's Daughter* – a richly imagined, wellresearched work of fiction focused on the daughter of a rabbinical leader in third-century Babylon and Israel. A heartfelt thank-you to our own Pro-

fessor Swartz – George, also a pastpresident of KJCC – for bringing his nephew Michael to our attention and available to the Adult Education Committee for this series.  $\diamond$ 



# Purim 2015

We had our KJCC Purim celebration on Wednesday, March 4th. It was a Wednesday, a school night. So we kept the singing, eating of pizza and reading of the Megilla to two hours so everyone could leave by 8:00. And you know what? It all worked beautifully. There was no shortage of

smiles, or gleeful twirling of groggers, or booing of Haman, or even costumes and some consumption of schnapps. (Mint, if memory serves, and peach.) And, yes, we read (and heard, the required mitzvah) every word of the Megillah. It's a wonderful

book. The Jews win every time.

Bernie Ginsberg showed everyone our actual KJCC Megillah scroll, written on parchment, a gift from a friend of Rabbi and Mindy Agler. Megillah scrolls have unique and beautiful artwork.





As she does every year, Joyce Peckman led the reading of the Megillah, above. But everyone reads in turn, even the children who can, and everyone participates. (Even our few non-Jewish guests took their turn.)







OH!

We want to give recognition to Steve and Men's club for setting up and supporting a well attended, mitzvahfilled Purim celebration simple, entertaining, with kid involvement, good food, and

a good dose of raucous, noisy rejection of Haman. (Boo. Hiss.) — *Gloria* 



# Shabbat Across America, KJCC-Style

*KJCC Taps into a Growing International Movement, which includes Canada, Mexico, Israel, Qatar and New Zealand — so far.* 

by Gloria Avner & Joyce Peckman

On Friday night, March 13, 2015, KJCC celebrated "Shabbat Across America." In so doing, we joined tens of thousands of Jews from all religious and cultural backgrounds, including synagogues from across the Jewish spectrum, JCCs, campus Hillels, and the United States military. Over 550 locations throughout the United States and Canada – as well as in



and new. Yardena worked with the children on the prayers. As hoped for, we had a mix of members and guests, including Sgt. Jason

Israel, Mexico, Qatar and New Zealand - ran celebratory events. Anyone could go online to

the NJOP website, type in their address or city and state, and find the nearest participating location. KJCC was there! NJOP

(formerly national Jewish Outreach Project) began this continent-wide event nineteen years ago. The idea was to give people everywhere "a taste of Shabbat." Good meals and lively discussions are all-important components of the Shabbat experience, as well as the opportunity to spend the evening with like-minded people, friends and family.

As we do everything, we joined in the festivities with zest. Gloria signed us up. She, Susan Gordon, Jules Seder and Roy Pollack practiced for hours on tunes, both familiar Madnick of the Monroe County Sheriff's Department, a KJCC member, who regularly keeps an eye on our shul during patrols when

we aren't here.

(Mah Nistanah Ha Shabbat HaZeh . .) Our congregation welcomed this annual continent-wide celebration of Shabbat with every mother in the room gathering around the candles and learning the true Shabbat candle-lighting melody (much as some of us love and don't want to give up the Chanukah lighting song). What

made this Shabbat different from all other Shabbats was our consciousness that all over the continent, and indeed the world, Jewish







women and families just like our *mishpocha* were putting special effort this night into the 4th Commandment - to observe Shabbat and make it holy.

What followed the blessings was a deli-

cious dairy dinner coordinated by Erica Lieberman-Garrett and her generous, talented team of Sisterhood cooks and decor mavens. (Special thanks to Medina Roy and Susan Gordon for attractive table settings.)

The service led by Gloria and Sam Vinicur continued the themes of Shabbat joyfulness, appreciation of women, and crosscontinental participation: Toronto natives







Erica, who chanted the *Hatzi* Kaddish, and Elinor Grossman, who led us in a responsive reading, were joined by our Montreal contingent, Sylvie Coeurjoly and daughter Mikhaela, who sang enthusiastically. In fact, this was a musical event from start to finish. We were honored to have Roy Pollack, all the way from music mecca Austin,

Texas, join Susan and Gloria on his guitar. We also were gifted with a glimpse of Susan Gordon's extraordinary "chops" on the Irish penny whistle. (For those who don't know, both of her parents were on the musical stage, Yiddish and American.) Variety keeps things interesting, so we had some upbeat new melodies to familiar prayers, including a "Jewgrass" version of *Shabbat shalom.*" In a special, tender cabaret moment, KJCC Musical Director Jules Seder played pi-





ano accompaniment while Gloria brought some of us to tears with heartfelt renderings of

classic Yiddish songs "*Rojinkes mit Mandlen*" (Raisins and almonds) and "*My Yiddishe Mama*," and then made us smile with an energetic "*Siman tov u mazal tov.*" After all, what would any Shabbat celebration be without honor-

ing the generations of *Yiddishe Mamas* who passed the tradition on to us? The ser-

vice ended with our students leading

us, almost successfully, in *Adon Olam* to the tune of Disney's "It's a Small World After All." What a night.  $\diamond$ 





All photos in this Shabbat Across America section courtesy of Barbara Knowles.



Gloria sang and co-led services, Susan sang and played the Irish Whistle, Jules accompanied Gloria on the Upper Keys Concert Association baby grand, and Roy Pollack played guitar. The lithe green fellow at left was an uninvited guest during rehearsal that afternoon. Roy gently escorted him out.

# The Miracle of Survival: The Old Story That Keeps Us New

by Gloria Avner

H istorians throw a fishnet backwards to bring forward the recoverable past. They are always re-deciding "History." After all, most history is written by the winners. A poet's job, on the other hand, is "to capture from the air a live tradition and make it new." That is our job too, individually and as a Jewish community, while we sit around our Passover tables.

I have written many times about *Pesach*. As I cast about, fishing in frustration for something fresh to say, a voice reminds me that rabbis share new insights on old holidays year after year. There is a ceaseless flow of beautiful new *Haggadahs* filled with essays and illuminating interpretations every year as well. Our best and brightest minds want and need to make our story contemporary. Novelist Jonathan Foer, whose new *Haggadah* appeared last year, says that Haggadahs will continue to be written forever, until there are no more Jews to write them, or until Elijah comes and there is no longer a need to say "Next year in Jerusalem."

Look at the *Haggadah* we use for the Women's Seder. Many of you have never seen this recent work or how it deals with issues of today. Barely twenty years old, this guide – filled with poetry, new versions of God's name and models of activist women working for freedom and justice – is immediately relevant to our lives: We don't live as our grandmothers did, but we admire and praise their strength, inviting them to join us, the independent women of the 21<sup>st</sup> century still traveling our tribe's 5,000-year-long journey.

Here is one example of how we take from the air a living tradition and make it new. Each verse of the traditional *Dayeinu* lists one of God's gifts to the Israelites, step by step on their journey. The refrain of *Dayeinu* shows how thankful we are for how much was given. Our congregation sings out the gifts of Exodus, Torah, and Shabbat. The interpretive *Dayeinu* changes focus from God to people and from past to present. We sing both versions. Here are the final six verses of the *"Ma'yan* Passover *Haggadah:* 

If we teach our children to pursue justice with all their strength,

If we care for the earth and its future as responsibly as we care for those

we love,

If we create art, music, dance, and literature, dayeinu.

If we realize our power to effect change, If we bring holiness into our lives, homes and communities,

If we honor our visions more than our fears, dayainu v'lo dayeinu.

Of course there will always be something new to say about Pesach. We must keep it new so that its importance reaches into our brains, hearts and spirits in novel ways, empowering us, to be fresh and meaningful today and memorable enough that our children will be inspired and eager to pass it on.

The whole point of the Passover Seder is that all Jews on the planet, the Jews of the Diaspora, are telling and hearing the same story on the same night. As their parents told it to them and ours to us, we need our children to tell it to their children. Let them take pride in reciting the *Feir Kashas* (four questions) and eagerly await the hunt for *afikomen*. The worldwide *Seder* is an artistic process of creation meant to forge one unified people out of far-flung folks who, whether or not we observe all the *mitzvot*, speak the same language, or go to *shul*, all want a seat at the table.

Passover is about personal, tribal and community freedom. As we bless our wine, point out the ritual foods and their meaning, we are talking about the perils faced in order to achieve freedom, the obstacles to keeping it, and the huge problems that stem from being viewed and perceived as people who are "other." Freedom has to have a context. The "Mitzraim" of each generation wear different clothes. (Hebrew uses the same word. *Mitzraim*, to refer both to Egypt as a country and to "tight narrow places.")

Renewing our covenant is not only done in a sanctuary with a Torah. At Passover we sit in comfortable, "*haimische*" surroundings among friends, family and hungry, lonely strangers. We hold high and share the "bread of af-

fliction." Together, in many voices, we review our journey. How did we get here? Children, are you listening? Let's put ourselves in the sandals of escaping slaves. All we own is on our backs. Trust in God is our only currency. We are the cast of thousands, the four types of children, Moses, Pharaoh, and the joyous, dancing women singing with Miriam on the far shore of the Reed Sea. We come from brave people. More than half of the Jewish slaves staved behind, afraid. Our ancestors listened to Moses, and left. What was that flight like for our forefathers? What was it like for our grandfathers escaping Europe, Russia, Iran? How do the oppressed in Africa, in Kurdistan, North Korea, and the underclasses in our own country keep hope for a better life alive? How do we work to repair the world?

Games, songs and *afikomen*-hunting keep our children present, active and interested. We want them to ask questions beyond the traditional four. They do ask. And we explain.

"The whole point of the Passover Seder is that all Jews on the planet, the Jews of the Diaspora, are telling and hearing the same story on the same night."

The *Haggadah* is a magnificent teaching tool and keeping the story engaging is why we are always writing new ones.

So what is it we are making new and how do we do it? Some of us will be capturing chil-

dren's attention by throwing plastic frogs and cattle and white bits of candy "hail" into the air when we talk about the ten plagues. Some children will take long scallions and whip their parents and teachers in re-enactment of what it is like to be both slave owner and slave. Mostly though, we talk, encourage guestions, take part in the ritual blessings, boom out the gratitude verses of "Dayeinu," and laugh breathlessly at the last verse of "Hod Gadyah." We'll add our own touch to the Biblical and shtetl songs by singing new ones to tunes from 20th centurv musicals. They'll make us laugh out loud. (Feel free to add "These are a few of my Passover Things" to your own

Seder—ask Joyce for a copy with all the verses. Below is a sample)

Cleaning and cooking and so many dishes; Out with the chametz, no pasta, no knishes. Fish that's gefilted, horseradish that stings, These are a few of our Passover things.

How could we not celebrate our survival against all odds? We commit to making ourselves more thoughtful people and the world a better place for our children to inherit. They are the ones who will carry on our tradition. It will become their story to tell. The dinner table is a classroom to that end. Our bellies full of delicious food, our covenant with God renewed, the *afikomen* found and ransomed, we leave the table with hope that our grand-children will hold *Seders* for their children and add their own aliveness and significance to the words "Next year in Jerusalem."  $\diamond$ 

# **Pesach Potpourri**

A collection of fun facts, factoids, esoterica and just plain interesting stuff about everyone's favorite religious holiday.

Most of you know that Pesach is one of the three pilgrimage festivals mentioned in the Torah, along with Shavuot and Sukkot. (Did you know that Shavuot is also known as "Pentecost," Greek for fifty?) During pilgrimage festivals, as you also know, the entire Judean population was expected to journey to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices at the Holy Temple. But did you know that Samaritans, even today, direct their worship not toward Jerusalem but toward Mt. Gerizim, near the West Bank city of Nablus? And why do the Samaritans matter? Because the Samaritans, who prefer to be called Israelites, are possibly the remnant of the northern Kingdom of Israel. When Israel was conquered by Sargon II and Assyria in 722 B.C.E., some 27,000 citizens were deported - mostly the priests and the wealthier upper classes. (Yes, it's similar to what was done later in Judah by the Babylonians.) But the majority of the population was left intact, with some sent from Assyria to fill in and rule. And today's Nablus is the Biblical Shechem, once the capital and spiritual center of ancient Israel, where they had their own Temple to God.

In ancient times, and well into and beyond the Roman era. there was a tradition to assure that Passover did not begin before spring. The month of Nisan could not start -Passover is mandated to be the 15th of Nisan - until the barley crop was ripe. If the barley was not yet ripe, or other observable phenomena told them that spring was not near. an additional month of Adar (Adar II) would be added just prior to Nisan. Since about the 4<sup>th</sup> Century C.E., the date has been fixed mathematically, perhaps with skills learned from the inventors of math, their neighbors in Egypt and Mesopotamia. (Passover always begins on the full moon immediately after the spring equinox.)

According to the Bible, an unblemished

lamb or goat is to be set apart five days prior to Pesach, on Nisan 10 (Exodus 12:3). It is to be slaughtered on Nisan 14 "between the two evenings," a phrase that is not clearly defined. The sacrifice is to be roasted whole, without the removal of any of its internal organs, and eaten "that night" along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Anything not eaten upon the next sunrise must be burned. And the sacrifices may only be performed in specific places prescribed by God. (For Judeans this meant Jerusalem, for Samaritans Mt. Gerizim.) Obeying this final instruction has been a bit awkward for Jews since being exiled *en masse* from the Holy Land by the Romans in 70 C.E.

Among the Biblical instructions about Passover is this interesting regulation, from Exodus 12:11, about how the Passover meal is to be eaten: "with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD's Passover." Not everyone today is intimately familiar with all of the Bible's text, so perhaps whoever leads any seder should make sure to pass this on.

There are many important themes and symbols associated with Passover. But one of the most important is the sense of *remembering*. In Deuteronomy 16:12, we are told "and thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondsman in Egypt; and thou shalt observe and do these statutes." In Exodus 12:14, after a reference to God sparing all Israelite firstborns from the Tenth Plague: "And this day shall be unto you for a memorial. and ve shall keep it a feast to the Lord: throughout your generations ve shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever." Exodus 13:3 continues the theme of remembering: "Remember this day, in which you came out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, for by strength the hand of the Lord brought you out from this place."

Because the sacrifice of a lamb or goat at the Temple at Passover was considered a sacred offering, only those who had the obligation to bring the offering were allowed to eat it. Among those not allowed to offer or eat the Passover lamb were: an apostate (Exodus 12:43); a servant (Exodus 12:45); an uncircumcised man (Exodus 12:48); a person in a state of ritual impurity, except when a majority of Jews are in such a state (from the Talmud, *Pesahim* 66b); and any non-Jew. Unlike most contemporary cultures, and others even millennia later, both men and women were obligated to make the offering. (*Pesahim* 91b). Both men and women were obligated to participate in the seder.

The first use in the Bible of the verb pasach is in Exodus 12:23, the account of the hasty departure from Egypt. It has traditionally been translated as God having "passed over" the houses of the Hebrews during the Tenth Plague. But this version comes from a prior translation, the Septuagint, the Greek translation, not the original Hebrew. Some linguists claim that a more faithful translation of the original would be "he hovered over. guarding." This would be consistent with the image evoked by the same verb used in Isaiah 31:5: "As birds hovering, so will the Lord of Hosts protect Jerusalem; He will deliver it as He protecteth it; He will rescue it as He passeth over." The first use in English of the term "Passover," by the way, is from William Tyndale's translation of the Bible. The term later appeared in the King James Version as well. (Neither was translated from the original Hebrew, but also used as its source the Greek Septuagint.)

The Torah says the origin of matzoh is that the Hebrews left Egypt in such haste that there was no time to allow the bread to rise. Surely matzoh is the symbol most readily associated with the Exodus. But non-Biblical scholars teach that, at the time of the Exodus, matzoh was common, baked prior to traveling because it preserved well and was light to carry. This clearly suggests that the Hebrews might have known a long journey lay ahead, and were preparing. In Hebrew, matzoh is also sometimes referred to as *lechem oni*, or "bread of poverty." This is another side of the story, a symbolic reminder to all Jews of what life is like as a poor slave. The idea is to promote humility, appreciate freedom, and avoid the vanities associated with luxuries such as fully leavened bread.

Ashkenazi Jews abstain from eating all cha*metz* during Passover – defined as anything made from the five major grains (wheat, rye, barley, oats and spelt) that has not been completely cooked within 18 minutes after first coming into contact with water. But they also, by rabbinical instruction, avoid eating kitniyot anything with corn, rice, beans and lentils. These foods were declared off-limits by the rabbis to honor the principle of *ma'arit ayin*. avoiding even the appearance of impropriety: since *kitnivot* can be ground up and cooked with other flour, even if accidentally, they are forbidden. Sephardic and Mizrachi lews are only forbidden chametz, and happily include rice among their particular Passover foods.

According to strict interpretations, we are not only forbidden to eat *chametz* during Passover, we are not allowed to own it or "derive benefit from it." We are therefore not even allowed to feed it to our pets or cattle. All *chametz*, including utensils used to cook it, must either be disposed of or sold to a non-Jew. (They can be re-purchased after the holiday.) To the *frum*, even pets' diets must be changed for the holiday, or, like *chametz*, the pets must also be sold to a non-Jew. Happily, they too may be re-purchased after the holiday is over.

The Haggadah (from the Hebrew root "to tell") is not a modern thing. Parts of it are found in the Mishnah, first edited around 200 C.E. The way we arrange our table today, the psalms and prayers we recite, and other elements mirror very closely the instructions offered in the Mishnah. Commentaries (Midrashim) were added (you know – two sages, three opinions), and the basic Haggadah was completed by the end of the Talmudic period, 500-600 C.E. By the eighth century C.E. its wide acceptance is shown by its inclusion in Rav Amram's popular siddur. ♦

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