



Services

Kabbalat Shabbat

Friday, April 5th, 12th, 19th & 26th from 5:45 PM – 6:30 PM ***Zoom only***

Morning Shabbat

Saturday, April 6th & 20th at 9:30 AM *** In Person & Zoom***

Bar Mitzvah of Darran Watts

Saturday, April 13th at 9:30 AM ***In Person with Streaming***

Congregational Family Havdalah Service led by Rabbi Saks w/Potluck Dinner to follow

Saturday, April 13th at 6:00 PM ***In Person only*** ***see attached flyer***

Passover Shabbat Service including a Yizkor

Saturday, April 27th at 9:30 AM ***In Person & Zoom***

Tuesday Minyan

Tuesday, April 2nd, 9th, 16th & 30th at 5:30 PM ***Zoom only***

No Tuesday minyan on Tuesday, April 23rd due to 2nd Night of Passover

April Events

Sisterhood Passover Wine Sale/Final Pickup: Sunday, April 7th 10:00 AM – 12:30 PM

Adult Education with Rabbi Saks: Sunday, April 14th from 9:00 AM – 10:00 AM

Passover Seder Dinner (Rabbi Saks joining in by Zoom): Tuesday, April 23rd at 6:00 PM ***see attached flyer***

Sprouts: Sunday, April 28th from 9:30 AM – 10:30 AM ***see attached flyer***

May Events

Friday Night Live Service w/Dinner (FNL) led by Rabbi Saks: Friday, May 3rd at 6:00 PM

Torah Study Session with Rabbi Saks: Saturday, May 4th from 10:30 AM – 11:30 AM

Tween/Teen Event: Saturday, May 4th at 6:00 PM ***see attached flyer***

Adult Education with Rabbi Saks: Sunday, May 5th from 9:00 AM – 10:00 AM

Mah Jong Tournament: Sunday, May 5th Doors Open: 9:45 AM 1st Round: 10:30 AM ***see attached flyer***

Youth Shabbat led by Rabbi Saks with potluck dinner to follow: Friday, May 17th at 5:30 PM

Bar Mitzvah of Zane Pezza led by Rabbi Saks: Saturday, May 18th at 9:30 AM

Adult Education with Rabbi Saks: Sunday, May 19th from 9:00 AM – 10:00 AM

Sprouts (Rabbi Saks at this session): Sunday, May 19th from 9:30 AM – 10:30 AM

Last Day of School: Graduation/Moving Up Ceremony: Sunday, May 19th at 10:30 AM



Evolving into a “Purim Jew” and a “Passover Jew” in a Time of War

I find one of the most fascinating characteristics of Torah to be how stories and teachings in Torah repeat themselves though often with some differences between one version of the other. These are not minor differences. Rather they teach us how Torah’s thinking on

particular topics evolve over time especially in regards to identifying what must be remembered most of all. The consequence of identifying such memories is also not minor, as I’m about to demonstrate how the evolution of Jewish memory in the stories of Purim and Passover reflects the tension in the Jewish community today watching the war in Gaza unfold. In short, these differences in using memory create “Purim Jews” who are traumatized by the atrocities committed on October 7th and believe future atrocities can only be prevented by further military operations in Gaza, and “Passover Jews” who are appalled by the deaths of thousands of civilians in Gaza and believe that more must be done to save innocent lives. The question I’d like us to ask ourselves is not “are you a Purim Jew” or “are you a Passover Jew?” No, the question I’d like us to ask ourselves is how to never forget the need for the lessons of Purim and Passover to exist together in the Jewish soul.

Let’s start with Purim.

In Deuteronomy 25:17-19 we read how the nation of Amalek attacked Israel from the rear (where the young, old, and sick were located). However, this description of Amalek’s cowardly attack from the rear was not mentioned in Amalek’s attack as it was originally described in Exodus 17:1-14. It is as if the Torah’s view of Amalek’s attack in Exodus evolved into a memory of a more heinous attack in Deuteronomy. Once this evolution occurs the memory of the attack becomes more significant than the attack itself. As it says in Deuteronomy 25:19, “Never Forget.”

Consider that on Shabbat Zachor - literally the Shabbat of “Remembrance” that is observed immediately before Purim - we read the memory of Amalek’s attack in Deuteronomy 25 in order to remember that Haman’s dastardly character in *Megillat Esther* was due to his ethnic identity as an Amalekite. By “never forgetting” that Haman is also an Amalekite, the Jews of Megillat Esther gave themselves the moral latitude to accept the killing of Haman, his family, and 75,000 nameless enemies as acts of righteous retribution (see Esther 9:4-10, 16).

As we just celebrated Purim it is hard not to see the similarities between the violence in Megillat Esther with the violence of the War in Gaza. In both cases there is an enemy (Haman & Hamas) who either plan or fulfill a terrible act against the Jews. In both cases the enemy is viewed as a modern manifestation of Amalek’s wickedness, like Hitler and the Inquisitors in other generations. In both cases the memory of tragic events and the fear of *what could* happen prove more durable, more haunting, and more likely to justify retribution than the tragic events themselves. Thus, every year Purim comes to remind us to “Never Forget” and “Fight Back.”

As we close the month of Adar in which we celebrated our victory over Haman and Amalek with the holiday of Purim, we head into the month of Nissan with the holiday of Passover and the story of the Exodus. Interestingly, the story of the Exodus is another example of the Torah’s evolution in the text. What’s more, this evolution also helps us understand that Jewish memory does not just teach us to “Never Forget and Fight Back,” but also to “Never Forget Who You Are.”

The version of the Ten Commandments we read in the book of Exodus teaches us to “remember Shabbat because God rested on the seventh day” (Exodus ??). This reason makes sense given how in Genesis 2; God gifted Shabbat for all people to reflect how God rested on the 7th day of Creation. However, in the version of the Ten Commandments we read in the book of Deuteronomy we are

April Events

Sisterhood Passover Wine Sale/Final Pickup:
Sunday, Apr. 7th; 10:00 am – 12:30 pm

Bar Mitzvah of Darran Watts

Sat. Apr. 13th at 9:30 AM

Congregational Family Havdalah led by Rabbi Saks

Sat. Apr. 13th; 6:00 pm

Adult Education with Rabbi Saks

Sun. Apr. 14th; 9:00 am

Passover Seder Dinner (In Person event. Rabbi Saks joining in by Zoom)

Tues. Apr. 23rd; 6:00 pm

Passover Shabbat Service including a Yizkor

Sat. Apr. 27th; 9:30 am

Sprouts with Morah Leah

Sun. Apr. 28th; 9:30 am

Passover Office Hours

Office closed for Passover on
Tues. April 23rd & Wed. April 24th,
Mon. April 29th & Tues. April 30th

May Events

Friday Night Live Service w/Dinner (FNL)

Fri., May 3rd; 6:00 PM

Torah Study Session with Rabbi Saks

Sat. May 4th; 10:30 AM

Tween/Teen Event

Sat., May 4th; 6:00 PM

Adult Education with Rabbi Saks

Sun. May 5th; 9:00am

Mahjong Tournament

Sun. May 5th; Doors Open: 9:45 AM; 1st Round: 10:30am

Youth Shabbat led by Rabbi Saks

Fri. May 17th; 5:30pm

Bar Mitzvah of Zane Pezza led by Rabbi Saks

Sat. May 18th; 9:30 am

Adult Education with Rabbi Saks

Sun. May. 19th; 9:00 am

Sprouts Program:

Sun. May 19th; 9:30 am

Last Day of School: Graduation/Moving Up Ceremony

Sun. May 19th; 10:30 am

commanded to “protect the Sabbath day because you were a slave in Egypt” (Deuteronomy 5:15). Why does Shabbat shift from being a universal remembrance for all people to a particular observance by a particular people? On face value, this evolution seems to emphasize how God cares more about the Jewish people than all other people, since only the Jewish people are given the gift and obligation of Shabbat. However, I believe this evolution teaches something different. As we understand from other sources, the term “slavery” is synonymous with “being a stranger” (see Exodus 22:21 for an example). Thus, Shabbat comes every week to remind the Jewish people that we were once strangers in a strange land and as such should treat strangers the way we would want to be treated. While Shabbat reminds us of our identity as strangers, Passover - and specifically the rituals of the Seder - come every year to educate our mind, body, and spirit on what it means to be a slave/stranger. We feel hunger, feel experience bitterness, and we ask why did this happen to us. In short, we remember what it was like to be strangers in a strange land *because that is who we are as a people*. No matter how free we may feel, no matter how in control we believe to be, we must never forget who we are - a stranger in a strange land. Imprinted with the feeling of being a stranger in our souls, perhaps to an excessive degree, we are motivated to care for the widow, the orphan, and the stranger; we teach our young to make the world better; we help others even when we know they won't return the help in kind.

Fueled by the memory of the Exodus from Egypt, many Jews are speaking out against the war Israel is conducting in Gaza. They are demanding we do not accept the Purim premise of “Never Forget and Fight Back” that morally justified killing 75,000 nameless Persians in *Megillat Esther* as a pretext for the death of over 30,000 Palestinians. Instead, they are calling us to recall the Passover promise to “Never Forget Who You Are” which demands us to care for strangers, even if they are our enemy.

It is not our responsibility to declare which kind of Jew - the Purim Jew or the Passover Jew - is correct. Our responsibility is to hold both of these holidays/identities together. We are the Purim Jew who fights others who hate us with force, *and* we are the Passover Jew who fights hate by reaching out to others with empathy. To deny one of these approaches is to deny a core component of our Jewish identity. Just like the how stories and teachings in Torah evolve, we have evolved as a people to understand and appreciate the values of both Purim and Passover as being necessary for our Jewish soul. Let us never forget one in favor of the other.

Rabbi Ari Y. Saks



Shalom fellow Congregants.

It was unfortunate that the weather was so bad the evening of March 23rd. It kept some people away from the Purim feast and the reading of Megillah. Those who were able to come were treated to a reading that reminded us of the story of Purim with an entertaining twist. Rabbi Saks had the room fully engaged with a very creative video presentation with an English translation (not completely literal) of most of the Megillah, which accompanied a beautiful

Hebrew reading by the Rabbi and David Wasser. If you missed it, you also missed the Rabbi in costume as the lion of Judah, as well as a number of participants both young and old in costume. The good news is that you have a chance to be there next year, when hopefully the weather will be better.

Purim, where we are commanded to have fun, is behind us now. Passover, a more sober (in more than one way) holiday with so many lessons to teach, is coming. You may have read recently that Prime Minister Netanyahu cancelled a visit to Washington by an Israeli delegation when the U.S. did not veto a United Nations Security Council resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. Without a U.S. veto, the resolution passed. When I read the story, and being mindful of Passover's approach, I was reminded of a comment Rabbi Saks recently made. When asked for his thoughts on the humanitarian situation in Gaza, he shared his concern that G_d might be hardening the hearts of some Israelis just as G_d hardened Pharaoh's heart when Moses and Aaron pleaded with Pharaoh to let the Jews leave Egypt. Now, I am not going to argue one way or another about the wisdom of the way the Israeli military is prosecuting the war. I've never lived in a place where a siren can sound at any time, warning of an imminent rocket attack, and I have no friends or relatives who were victims of the October 7th attack. I will only say I hope and pray, that G_d grants the leaders of all parties involved the wisdom to bring about an end to the conflict, with the return of the remaining hostages, a minimum of further loss of life, and a safe and secure existence for the people of Israel and the Palestinian territories. Getting back to the Purim feast, I was having a discussion with someone who mentioned that they still worried about some attack at the temple. I continue to read the near daily reports from the Secure Community Network. There continue to be no reports of violence in Rhode Island and no recent reports of vandalism of synagogues or homes in the state. We no longer appear to be at risk to any greater extent than we were before October 7th.

Unlike some synagogues, we have decided not to hire security for every service or event. The people who regularly attend Shabbat morning services have not mentioned to me that they would prefer to have security present. As Jews,

we have lived for with the possibility, in some cases the certainty, of mindless violence. That did not begin on October 8, 2023. The discussion prompting these thoughts took place at the Purim feast, so obviously the person I spoke with was not so anxious that they stayed away, but it got me thinking that perhaps are concerned enough that they are staying away.

As I've described previously in our bulletin, measures have been implemented, e.g., locked and monitored doors, arranging for increased police patrols, to help ensure our safety. Still, neither I nor anyone on the board wants someone to be fearful about coming to synagogue. If you are concerned and think more need safety measures should be implemented, please let me know. Perhaps there are additional steps we can take that we haven't yet thought of.

And speaking of letting me know, I was out of town during the last board meeting. When I returned, I was told that several people expressed concerns about the Religious School at the meeting. I assume the issues did not arise for the first time on the Sunday before the board meeting, which suggests that members are hesitant to bring their concerns to me. As president of board, I want to know if people have concerns about any aspect of our community and I would greatly appreciate hearing about these first-hand. I can't work to address concerns if I don't know about them, and I would be very upset to see someone leave our community without being given the chance. So, please come to me with any synagogue-related issues.

Shalom,

Michael



Torat Yisrael's Cohen School

As I have mentioned previously, my ultimate goal for our Religious School students is to feel a connection to their heritage, regardless of background. We provide multiple opportunities to experience Judaism. Hebrew comes second, as it is very challenging to even WANT to learn a new language, let alone one that is not even close to English, without a primary connection. This is why I have launched Hebrew in Harmony - our new Hebrew program. Students are able to find a connection to Hebrew and Judaism through music and bringing it to their everyday lives.

The K-1 class has been learning about the story of Purim. They have also gotten even further in the Aleph Bet, so that they are ready for Hebrew in Harmony.

In grades 2/3, we are diligently learning the prayer, "Barchu," through Hebrew in Harmony. We are also learning more about Purim.

In grades 4/5, we are finishing up our learning about "Aleinu." We have discussed our responsibilities as Jews, students, and members of different types of communities. We also made our own groggers for Purim!

In grades 6/7, we are working towards learning how to be good examples for the younger students. We are also continuing our Holocaust learning and delving into the weekly parsha.



Librarian's Corner

Inheritance by Dani Shapiro

From the acclaimed, best-selling memoirist, novelist - "a writer of rare talent" (Cheryl Strayed) - and host of the hit podcast Family Secrets, comes a memoir about the staggering family secret uncovered by a genealogy test: an exploration of the urgent ethical questions surrounding fertility treatments and DNA testing, and a profound inquiry of paternity, identity, and love.

What makes us who we are? What combination of memory, history, biology, experience, and that ineffable thing called the soul defines us?

In the spring of 2016, through a genealogy website to which she had whimsically submitted her DNA for analysis, Dani Shapiro received the stunning news that her father was not her biological father. She woke up one morning and her entire history - the life she had lived - crumbled beneath her.

Inheritance is a book about secrets - secrets within families, kept out of shame or self-protectiveness; secrets we keep from one another in the name of love. It is the story of a woman's urgent quest to unlock the story of her own identity, a story that has been scrupulously hidden from her for more than 50 years, years she had spent writing brilliantly, and compulsively, on themes of identity and family history. It is a book about the extraordinary moment we live in - a moment in which science and technology have outpaced not only medical ethics, but also the capacities of the human heart.

Laura Steele



Sisterhood

Hopefully, April brings the flowers since March brought the rain. Maybe the Jewish leap year with two months of Adar confused the weather. In spite of the weather, Sisterhood continued to get together in a beautiful prayer service honoring the important role of women in our history and in our congregation. Led by Rabbi Saks, the women stepped up and participated in

the Shabbat morning with a special prayer of protection for our co-president Marion Woolf's son Jason, as he was recently deployed as a Marine overseas. The service was followed by a delicious kiddush lunch prepared by our resident chef, Elaine Shapiro.

Our Passover wine sale pre-orders are in and we are gearing up to distribute those and to sell more on Sunday, April 7th. Keep an eye out for our May event, a boat tour of the Providence River and for our end of the year luncheon in June. We wish you all a wonderful Pesach!!

Please feel free to join the family of Leah Ross-Coke (the other co-president), as her son, Darran becomes a Bar Mitzvah on April 13th. Just let her know if you are coming by RSVP'ing to LRC275@verizon.net, so we can have sufficient preparations.

Leah Ross-Coke and Marion Woolf, Co-Presidents



Message from Ways and Means

A Night of Laughter and Generosity: Recap of our Successful Fundraising Event!

We're still buzzing with excitement after a fantastic evening at our "Laugh the Night Away" fundraising event! With around 130 attendees, the night was filled with laughter, camaraderie, and most importantly, generosity.

Three talented comedians had the crowd in stitches throughout the evening, providing non-stop entertainment and creating an atmosphere of joy and merriment. Their performances truly added to the success of the event.

But the laughter wasn't the only highlight of the night. Thanks to the incredible support of our attendees, we were able to raise a substantial amount of money to support our cause. This wouldn't have been possible without the generous contributions made during the auction, which featured a wide array of exciting items up for grabs.

The atmosphere was further enhanced by the beautiful decorations adorning the room, courtesy of Jo-Ann Antin and the dedicated members of the Ways and Means Committee. Their efforts transformed the venue into a visually stunning space, setting the perfect backdrop for the evening's festivities.

And let's not forget about Linda Weisman's dessert table, which was a feast for both the eyes and the taste buds. Her delectable creations were a hit with everyone in attendance, adding a touch of sweetness to the night.

Of course, none of this would have been possible without the hard work and dedication of everyone involved. From those who helped in the kitchen to those who volunteered their time to ensure the event ran smoothly, we are incredibly grateful for your support.

As the night came to a close, there was already talk of next year's event. With such a successful turnout and overwhelming support, we can't help but look forward to what the future holds. Thank you to everyone who contributed to making this night one to remember, and here's to many more successful fundraisers in the future!

Frederic G. & Lawrence G. Cohen Educational Scholarship

Any student entering full-time college or currently in college full-time who has not received the Cohen Scholarship previously may be eligible for a \$5,000 scholarship over the number of years in college. Parents or parent must be a current member in good standing for the past 5 years prior to applying. They must also be a current member of the Men's Club and/or Sisterhood for the past 5 years before applying. If interested and to obtain an application, please contact the Torat Yisrael office at (401) 885-6600. The application must be received in the Temple office by June 10, 2024.

Message from Temple Office

If you would like your monthly bulletin, yahrzeit notices and/or thank you notes by email only, please notify the Temple office by either calling 401-885-6600 or email Temple@toratyisrael.org.



Let's Celebrate Darran Watts Bar Mitzvah

Darran Watts is 13 years old and attends Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School in Coventry. He loves to play basketball and baseball. He is excited to have played on the school basketball team and just made the school baseball team. Darran has played on multiple teams at the same time, but finds time to attend Sunday School at the Cohen School and go to Camp Jori, where he has spent the last 8 summers with his brother Tylah. He also plans to teach younger children basketball skills during the off season, to share his love of the sport.

Darran was proud to bring Max's Lunch Bunch to the Sunday School organizing sandwich making and donation of over 150 sandwiches to Praise Tabernacle Church for distribution to the homeless from their food truck.

He is excited to be part of the minyan and to become a Bar Mitzvah on April 13th. Please join his parents, Leah Ross-Coke and Kenny Kuzman, and his beloved Savta, Ruth Ross, as Darran leads the congregation and celebrates this accomplishment. Please let us know if you are attending so we can prepare appropriately.

Weekends that Rabbi Saks is in Rhode Island - April – June 2024

April 12th – 14th

May 3rd – 5th and May 17th & 18th

June 7th – 9th

Upcoming Events for May & June 2024

May

Friday Night Live on Friday, May 3rd

Tween/Teen Event on Saturday, May 4th

Mah Jong Tournament on Sunday, May 5th

Youth Shabbat on Friday, May 17th

Bar Mitzvah of Zane Pezza on Saturday, May 18th

Last Day of School/Graduation on Sunday, May 19th

June

Beach Shabbat on Friday, June 7th

Shavuot Shabbat Service including a Yizkor on Saturday, June 15th

Congregational Meeting on Tuesday, June 25th

In Our Torat Yisrael Family



Mazal Tov to everyone celebrating a Birthday in April!

Sherrie Salinger, Sheryl Barlow, Nathan Malinow (17 years old), Adair Kentor (8 years old), Rachel Silverman, Samantha Barr (9 years old), Sigal Bryk, Michelle Hammer, Anita Olinsky, David Rush, Barbara Goldberg, Tim Handford, Stephen Salinger, Allyson Antin, Joseph Janton, Sharon Field, Emma Donovan (9 years old), Baya Ginsburg (20 years old), Esme Ginsburg (20 years old) & Scott Libman.

Mazel Tov to everyone celebrating an Anniversary in April!

Mr. & Mrs. Steven Shapiro (51 years)

Our Torat Yisrael Community Acknowledges with Thanks the following Generous

March 2024 Donations:

GENERAL FUND

In Memory of Trude Antin

-Ellen & Barry Golden

In Memory of Helene Liner

-Ruth & Arnold Blasbalg

In Memory of Esther Monzack

-Jason & Judith Monzack

In Memory of Helen Janis Shuman

-Bruce Shuman

MYER GROSSMAN FUND

In Memory of Bella Foster

-Anita & Alan Olinsky

In Memory of Clara Olinsky

- Alan & Anita Olinsky