

# CONGREGATION ETZ CHAIM

March- June 2019



Congregation  
Etz Chaim

A Reform Jewish Congregation  
Fairport, New York

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## From the Rabbi's Desk

It seems that even before the stores have sold their Halloween candy, retail stores and supermarkets are incessantly blaring Christmas carols, and perhaps the most played one on their rotation is "I'll Be Home For Christmas."

But in Jewish families, being home for the holidays is not about December. You can always mail Chanukah presents. And really, who travels hundreds of miles for latkes when they're so simple to make?

No, for us, it's "I'll Be Home For Pesach." The High Holidays may draw secular Jews to the synagogue, but it's Passover that motivates us to make the effort to have the family together for a truly meaningful home ritual. Sometimes we use the free Maxwell House Hagaddah. Sometimes we use fancy, illustrated volumes of Passover Hagaddah. And at Etz Chaim's annual community seder, we use a Hagaddah that we wrote, a more egalitarian Hagaddah than the ones most of us have in our homes.

But who actually wrote the Hagaddah?

The answer is not as simple as it might seem. In ancient Israel, Judah,

Diaspora and Judea, there was no hagaddah. Passover was a pilgrimage festival. It was not about the story. It was about the *sacrifices*.

But after the destruction of the second Temple and the destruction of the Jewish state by the Romans, the religious center of Judaism became the small town of Javneh, and the small circle of rabbis who were tasked with keeping Jewish practice alive in a broken state. Initially, the rabbis re-established the Sanhedrin; under the leadership of Rabban Gamaliel II, the practice was adopted of sacrificing a baby goat – a kid – for the Passover meal.

But it was a controversial decision, and rabbinic authorities did away with the practice within a few generations. By the end of the second century CE, animal sacrifices were all but defunct. Instead, the mitzvah of telling the Passover story, with all its nationalistic overtones and prayers for messianic redemption, arose.

It arose with the development of the Mishnah, the first codification of the Oral Tradition that supplemented written law. There is no extant Mishnah-era hagaddah, but the order of the seder is specified in the Mishnah.

According to Elon Gilad, columnist for Israel's newspaper Haaretz and a contributor to the US publication Forward (the old Yiddish daily Forward), the earliest mention of a Hagaddah in Talmud dates to the fourth century CE as a book that was permitted to be lent out for copying. The oldest surviving Hagaddah dates to the eighth century CE Cairo.

Some practices, such as Kiddush, dipping of the vegetable, and washing of the hands are mentioned in "Talmud.

Others, like breaking the middle matzah and telling the story, have their origins in the Middle Ages. The four questions? They've changed over time, too. Originally, they asked why this night was different – why do we eat matzah, why do we eat bitter herbs, why do we dip vegetables, and why do we eat roasted meat? Roasted meat was dropped because of its allusion to sacrifices, and eventually was replaced with why do we recline.

The answer to the question, the current maggid, first appears in a ninth century hagaddah.

In short, different components of our traditional seder were added at different times, in different regions by both Ashkenazic and Sephardic Jews.

As for egalitarian seders, we have modern feminism to thank for that. The first feminist hagaddot began to appear in the US in the 1970s -- and these were

for *women's* seders, not egalitarian ones. But over the past five decades, authors and congregations have combined elements of traditional and feminist into more egalitarian versions. Whereas the traditional Asheknazic hagadah does not mention Moses – but mentions plenty of Talmudic sages – the feminist versions celebrated Miriam, and the egalitarian ones then celebrated Moses, Miriam and Nachson, as well as ancient rabbis and the prophet Elijah.

What it tells us is that our celebration of Passover, and our way of telling the Passover story, is a living, evolving ceremony, one that draws us together with a powerful attraction no other Jewish holiday can match.

I'll be home for Pesach, but not just in my dreams. For as it is said, *Im tirzu, ein zo agaddah.*

If you will it, it is no dream.

Rabbi David Abrahams

## **Purim Potluck**

Our Purim celebration coming up on Friday, March 22 at 6:00pm. Please make sure you rsvp by Wednesday March 19th. Please rsvp with what you will be bringing remember this is a dairy Potluck so please no meat. Also we will need some volunteers to help with set up! We are having a hamantaschen baking contest so make your best to the potluck to be judged. As always we encourage everyone to dress up!

## Community Seder

Please join us at Etz Chaim members and guests participate in our Community Seder on Saturday, April 20<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 p.m. This event will be held in the social hall at Mountain Rise, and is open to everyone. If you haven't already replied, please RSVP for the seder by contacting our Congregation Administrator, Ashley, at 223-5344 or [ashleyetzchaim@gmail.com](mailto:ashleyetzchaim@gmail.com) The main dish will be chicken, and we ask everyone to bring a dish to share that is in keeping with Passover. This is a meat meal - please no dairy.

Just a reminder that Congregation Etz Chaim is affiliated with the Union for Reform Judaism. You can find information about holidays, podcasts, Israel, and Jewish life in general on their website at <https://urj.org/>

## Oneg Sign Up

If you haven't had a chance yet to sign up for a oneg or Holiday potluck, it's not too late! Just email Ashley to let her know when you can help. We understand that it's often hard to plan out months in advance, so just make your best guess. If it turns out that you're unable to help on your assigned date, let Ashley know and a replacement will be found.

The Board would like to invite members to sponsor an oneg and/or have an aliyah when you celebrate a birthday, anniversary, or special time in your life. Please email Ashley with information about your special simchas.

## Etz Chaim Shout Outs!

Pam and Marv Cohen would like to congratulate their grand daughter Rachel Cohen's acceptance to Geneseo College this fall.

We would all like to wish Lynn Harris a very happy birthday on March 30<sup>th</sup>

Lori Slomovic would like to wish her son Joe Slomovic a very happy birthday on March 26<sup>th</sup>!

Pam Cohen would like to give a shout out to her family!

Grandson Robert's 15<sup>th</sup> birthday on May 4<sup>th</sup>, granddaughter Sierra's 11<sup>th</sup> birthday on April 14<sup>th</sup>, and husband Marv's 77<sup>th</sup> birthday on April 13<sup>th</sup>.

Jesse and Ethan Jurman have birthdays on March 20<sup>th</sup>. They are now 26 years old.

David Alman and Martine Backetstoss would like to wish their daughter Camille a happy birthday on March 23<sup>rd</sup>. They are also celebrating their anniversary on April 11<sup>th</sup>. Congratulations!

Andrew and Brenda Goodfriend would like to wish their son Ben a very Happy Birthday! He is turning 23 on March 31<sup>st</sup>!

Thanks for sharing all of your special occasions with us! We wish all of you love and happiness! Please continue to share with us any important events in your life!

## Donations

In memory of Ilene Steron  
Lynn Harris

General Fund  
Louise Eisman

## Thinking About Summer

And who doesn't want to think about summer during these cold wintry days? Normally we would have a Shabbat service/cookout at Perinton Park in June. This year, however, a Shavuot dairy potluck is scheduled for Saturday, June 8. Rather than having two dinners in the same month, we have elected to move the Perinton Park service/cookout to Friday, August 16. Reminders will be sent out as the season progresses but it's never too early to mark your calendar for this summer event.

## Survey coming, please respond

The Jewish Federation of greater Rochester and the Farash foundation will, later this Spring, be doing a demographic study of our area's Jewish community and participation in Jewish life.

Please take the time to fill out the survey; this is a study done every 10 years, but this will be the most comprehensive to date.

We live in an area of between 17,000 and 20,000 Jews; the number affiliated with synagogues is somewhere between

5,500 and 6,500. The goal of the survey is to chart a path that will revive community engagement, regardless of how "religious" one may consider himself/herself.

Rochester has a nationwide reputation for a vibrant Jewish community. Please help ensure the future of this community, fill out the survey, and encourage your Jewish friends and neighbors, regardless of whether they attend a synagogue, to do the same.

With sincerest thanks,  
Rabbi David Abrahams

## Etz Chaim Fundrasier

CONGREGATION ETZ CHAIM FUNDRAISER

### Happy Passover Gift Bags

Each Bag Contains:

- A Passover Cake*
- Children's Story Book*
- Matzo Ball Mix*
- Passover Oven Mitts*
- Jelly Slices*
- Box of Matzo*
- Sheet of Stickers*
- Children's Coloring Book*

All Food Items are Kosher for Passover!  
Orders must be placed by MARCH 22nd.  
To place an order call (585) 266-4954. Each gift bag is \$40  
Please share this email with friends and relatives.

<b>Month</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Day</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Comments</b>
MARCH	22	Friday	Purim Potluck	6:00 PM	Mountain Rise Social Hall (DAIRY)
	24	Sunday	Religious School	9-12:00 PM	JCC
	31	Sunday	Religious School	9-12:00 PM	JCC
APRIL	5	Friday	Shabbat Service	7:30 PM	Mountain Rise
	7	Sunday	Religious School	9-12:00 PM	JCC
	14	Sunday	Annual Meeting	6:00 PM	Mountain Rise Classroom
	14	Sunday	Religious School	9-12:00 PM	JCC
	20	Saturday	Community Seder	5:30 PM	Mountain Rise Social Hall (set up 4:30)
	21	Sunday	Religious School	9-12:00 PM	JCC
	28	Sunday	Religious School	9-12:00 PM	JCC
MAY	3	Friday	Shabbat Service	7:30 PM	Mountain Rise
	5	Sunday	Religious School	9-12:00 PM	JCC
	12	Sunday	Religious School	9-12:00 PM	JCC
	17	Friday	Shabbat Service	7:30 PM	Mountain Rise
	19	Sunday	Board Planning Meeting	7:00 PM	Mountain Rise Classroom
JUNE	2	Sunday	Religious School	9-12:00 PM	JCC
5	8	Saturday	Shavuot dairy potluck	7:00 PM	Mountain Rise (Ice Cream Social)
	9	Sunday	Religious School	9-12:00 PM	JCC
	23	Sunday	Board Meeting	7:00 PM	Mountain Rise Classroom



