



TEMPLE BETH SHALOM

Connection • Caring • Meaning • Making Memories Together. . . All in Your Shul by the Sea!

7th of Nisan (April 8, 2022)

Temple Beth Shalom Congregant(s)
18 Sweet Passover Lane
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Dear Friend,

Passover is a living Jewish narrative. Every day, our hearts echo to deepest truths of the human condition. All of us yearn to be free. We seek to exercise our agency, living our lives to the fullest. Unfortunately, the last couple of years made it very difficult to do that, at least without some significant hurdles. Many of us remain vigilant to keep ourselves and our loved ones safe as we navigate this new world where safety and freedom have taken on new meanings. For those of us with children or grandchildren or other family in our daily care, our persistent focus remains on everyday safety that includes waning vaccinations and so much more.

Yet, we persevere with uplifted spirits buoyed by the love that we have exchanged with our family and neighbors. We recall those whom we have lost or whose lives have become diminished through the passage of time or something unexpected. We sustain our careful behavior and honor each other's caution as we all seek our way forward. We honor the blessing of community that our ancestors displayed as they left Egypt, forming a People from a mixture of refugees and ex-slaves.

Each year, we re-enact our ancestors' experience of the Exodus, and we try to make it our own. The Passover Holiday season finds us examining our lives to uncover if we are seeing the free person we hoped to be. So, how do we prepare for life's tests? We do what we Jews have always done: We create and re-enact rituals. We would probably be surprised when we realize how much we institute these rituals throughout our daily existence. Without them, though, we would be challenged to remain who we are by maintaining our perspective. We embrace our Passover traditions and work hard to live more meaningful lives.

As a part of the ritual of preparing for *Pesach*, we clean our homes and we restrict our access to our *Hametz* (either by throwing it away, giving it away, or storing it away). And, whatever *Hametz* we have left (or, have stored away), we sell to a non-Jew so that we do not possess the very thing that our ancestors were denied. As we make our homes free from *Hametz*, we free ourselves from that which enslaves us: the *Hametz* in our lives.

Again this year, we continue living under some form of caution. We honor our heritage by uplifting our holy purpose in protecting those around us from harm. In this light, I encourage you to explore the guidance provided two years ago by the Conservative Movement's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards (CJLS) regarding leniency in preparing for and observing Passover, which still holds for this year's observance: <https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/story/kashrut-subcommittee-recommendations-passover-5780-light-covid-19> – and, you can find all of the latest information regarding our observance of *Pesach*, including learning, innovative observance ideas, and step-by-step guidance, in one location: <http://www.cjhighholidays.com/passover/>

Regarding the selling of *Hametz*: Again this year, most Rabbis of Conservative shuls are not **selling** their congregants' *Hametz* themselves. Instead, we are directing our congregants to the Rabbinical Assembly's online form, which can be found here (*until April 14 at 12 PM*): <https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/webform/sale-hameitz-5782> – it is quick and easy to fulfill this mitzvah. If you miss this deadline, please know that you can email me and I will include you in my sale (please include your name(s), address(es), and contact information).

Separately, and NOT required for you to sell your *Hametz*, if you would like to make a donation to fulfill the mitzvah of *Maot Hittin*, a traditional donation to help those in need of assistance to observe Passover or simply to feed themselves, this can be done either by making a donation directly to the Passover League of Philadelphia (<https://www.passoverleague.org>) or Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger (<https://mazon.org>), or both, as I do each year. This year, I have included the Stand with Ukraine Emergency Fund of the American Jewish Committee (https://www.ajc.org/ukraine?utm_source=AJC.org&utm_medium=hphero&utm_campaign=SupportUkraine&utm_content=hphero) and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's (<https://www.jdc.org/disasters/ukraine-response/>) focused fund to help Jews in Ukraine and those elsewhere who are in flight from the war.

Finally, I want to leave you again this year with a special prayer I have written that might bring further perspective to our Passover Seders and every day of our Passover observance (I suggest that you consider reciting it before beginning the Seder or, perhaps, at its conclusion):

*“O God, help us to break free of the shackles of our circumstance;
Teach us to make the most of the moments we have.
Grant us safety and rest in the face of ridicule and uncertainty.
Guide us toward hopefulness over feeling helpless.
Free us from locale, whether mapped or reflecting our narrowness within.
And, above all: Bless us with miracles of medical science and the simplest of human kindnesses.*

In this season of freedom, may we be granted the holiest gift of forgotten fears, and release from the clenched jaw and fists that prevent our embracing our lives and forming the words of love that made our ancestors free so that we might live today.

O God, make your Heavenly Shefa of blessings flow that might allow us to quench our thirst for freedom and know, once more, that we are renewed with clarity and connection.”

Whether we are observing our Passover Seders by ourselves or just with our immediate family, or if we will be expanding our circle at home or by using technology to observe the holiday safely in our own homes, we cannot help but develop an elevated spiritual perspective when we embrace such self-awareness. In so doing, we are granted the blessing of seeing ourselves and our world with clarity.

On this Passover, let us commit to one another to find our path forward by remembering that our todays are built on yesterdays, that our kindness toward others begins with our love for ourselves, and secure in the knowledge that the worst of our struggles shall assuredly pass. Let us remember that, in our distance, we have learned that we are always close.

Please know that I and my family feel connected to you regardless of our distance – let’s focus on our blessings. We wish you a sweet and happy *Pesach*,

Rabbi Gerald R. Fox & Sarah, Matan & Doron

PS: If you are looking for some assistance in figuring out how to manage Passover in any situation, through a couple of years old, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA) has conveniently compiled a wide-ranging list covering topics from holding a Seder to shopping for the holiday, and so on (<https://www.jta.org/2020/03/31/culture/having-a-solo-passover-seder-there-are-plenty-of-guides-for-you>) – and, there is something for everyone to make your Passover even more fun and meaningful this year on MyJewishLearning (the videos are especially accessible and enlightening)! Here’s the direct link: (<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/category/celebrate/passover/>)