



THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RABBIS 23 YEARS

TRAVELING THROUGH COVID

Traveling a path with stories and myths of our ancestors' journey.

We recall the multitude of paths our own lives have taken.

Some smooth, softly inviting, we trod gently aware of the beauties of nature, the bounties of our lives.

Other paths, often stone filled, Forced us to tread with caution
Prodding awareness of life's sharper edges.

This Passover we look back, in sadness, in shock, in sorrow, At the boulders that blocked the pathways of our lives.
We are harshly reminded that life can alter instantly.
Life's plans, seemingly predict-

able, abruptly diverge:
Destabilize, Dangerous, Destructive.
Yet we, like our ancestors, are charged to move forward, To uphold the promise of renewal, Of new paths we must pave for ourselves and for those who follow.
Let us journey together into the springtime:
Growth, Change, Hope
Let the path we build be our legacy. *from: Congregation Beth Adam; Loveland, Ohio*
(Used with permission)
- Rabbi Frank Tamburello



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IFR Mission Statement

The IFR is a professional organization of rabbis united by a commitment to Jewish tradition and a desire to facilitate the Jewish spiritual growth and life cycle needs of all.

The IFR provides a progressive, pluralistic forum, linking member rabbis in a spirit of friendship and a sense of community.

The IFR provides support for members in their professional endeavors and offers continuing education.

The IFR encourages professional relationships with rabbis and other rabbinic organizations.

Shabbat Shalom 5783!

IFR Zooming rabbis - you see their names weekly, they have been hosting Friday evening Kabbalat Shabbat zoom services for quite sometime throughout The Covid 19 pandemic. They keep it going from coast to coast in the USA and Europe as well.

IFR Member Rabbi Buz Bogage:

PRAYER, MEDITATION, TORAH POETRY, LEARNING, COMMUNITY ! SHABBAT WORSHIP JOIN US

7 PM (ET) - 5 PM (MT) - 4PM (PT) with Pauline, and Rabbi Adele Plotkin - Join Zoom Meeting LINK: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82350746255>..

Meeting ID: 823 5074 6255 Passcode: Peace

IFR Member Rabbi Jill Hausman: The Actors Temple : 7:00 PM Eastern Time Friday Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9557555342>

Meeting ID: 955 755 5342 Passcode: 497495

IFR Member Rabbi Leonard Sarko: Congregation Emanu-El Israel Greensburg, PA Friday Evenings 7:00 PM Eastern Time LINK:

<https://www.gotomeet.me/Ceigreenburg>

IFR Member Rabbi Galit Shirah Levy - Slater: Beit HaLev Zoomagogue services Zoom link for all Friday and Saturday services:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9152434704>

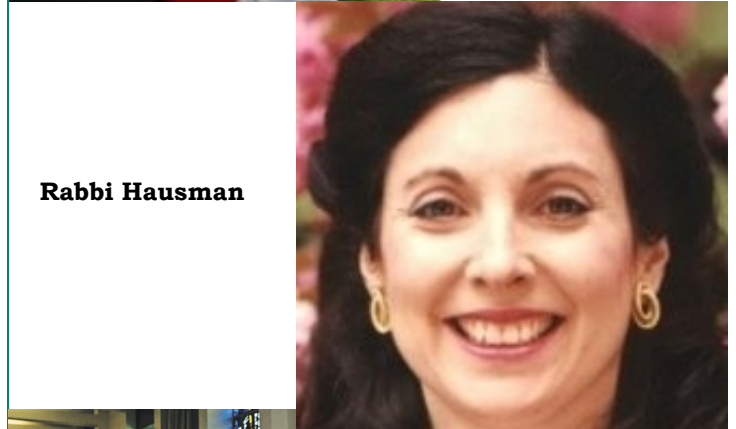
Meeting ID: 915 243 4704



Rabbi Bogage



Rabbi Dr. Plotkin



Rabbi Hausman



Rabbi Sarko

Rabbi Levy - Slater



Shabbat Shalom 5783!

IFR Zooming rabbis - you see their names weekly, they have been hosting Friday evening Kabbalat Shabbat or Chagim with zoom services for quite sometime throughout The Covid 19 pandemic. They keep it going from coast to coast in the USA and in Italy as well.

Rabbi Barbara Aiello in Calabria...



THE RADIO RABBI IS BACK!



Join Rabbi Barbara Aiello, your Radio Rabbi on **WWPR AM 1490 (Bradenton, Florida)**, every **FRIDAY NIGHT** at 7:00 PM US EASTERN TIME, rebroadcast on Saturday afternoon at 1:00 pm or listen live stream at 1490wwpr.com



Ravenous Ravens



Rabbi Frank Tamburello's column
featuring Jewish holiday Eats and Treats



Cucumbers with Smetene

- 1 cup sour cream
- 3 large cucumbers
- 3 tablespoons vinegar
- 3 tablespoons water
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon sugar

Pare cucumbers. Slice in thin slices. Add salt and let stand for one hour. Squeeze cucumbers. Rinse in water and drain. Combine water, vinegar, and sour cream and sugar. Mix and chill.



Amaretti per Pesach - Passover Almond Cookies (Sefardic recipe)

- 2 1/2 cups almond flour or finely ground almonds
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 large egg whites, beaten
- 15 to 20 almonds for decoration

Preheat oven to 300 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. In a medium bowl, whisk together the almond flour and sugar. In separate bowl, whisk egg whites until they hold firm peaks, about 5 minutes.

Add beaten egg whites to the almond flour/sugar mixture and stir until a soft, sticky dough forms.

Use small cookie scoop, form dough into walnut size balls. Place on baking sheet 1" apart. Flatten each cookie slightly, and press an almond on each.

Bake for 20-25 minutes until cookies are cracked and slightly golden. Keep an eye on the amaretti while they are cooking because they tend to burn quickly on the bottom. Transfer to a wire rack to cool.



Ravenous Ravens



**Rabbi Frank Tamburello's column featuring
Jewish holiday Eats and Treats**

Beef Stew in Carrot Wine Sauce

2 lbs. boneless beef chuck, cut in 1 1/2 inch cubes

1 1/2 cups dry, red wine

1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil

3/4 cup tomato puree

2 carrots, peeled and cut in half

2 celery ribs, cut in half

1 small onion, quartered

Pinch of ground cloves

1 teaspoon kosher salt, plus more to taste

Freshly ground black pepper

In Dutch oven, combine beef, wine, olive oil, tomato puree, carrots, celery, onion, cloves, salt and pepper to taste.

Pour in enough water to cover all ingredients, and bring to a simmer over medium heat, then reduce heat to medium low, partially cover, and cook, adding water if needed to keep the ingredients covered, for 2 to 2 1/2 hours, until the meat is tender. With a slotted spoon, remove beef from pot and set aside on a platter.

Using an immersion blender, or regular blender, and blend contents of pot to obtain a smooth liquid. sauce. Return meat to pot and bring just to a simmer, and simmer for a few minutes, until the sauce thickens enough to coat the meat. Adjust salt and pepper to taste.



Beet Hummus

4 small cooked beetroots

1 cup cooked chickpeas

3 tablespoons tahini

4 tablespoons olive oil

1 large clove garlic

6-8 tablespoons lemon juice

1/2 teaspoon salt

Black or cayenne pepper to taste

Blend all the ingredients in a food processor until smooth.

The color will be bright magenta!



Ravenous Ravens



**Rabbi Frank Tamburello's column featuring
Jewish holiday Eats and Treats**

Tante Emma's Poppy Seed Torte

- 1 3/4 cups poppy seeds
- 1/2 cup butter
- 1 cup fine sugar
- 5 medium eggs
- 4 tablespoons sweet red wine
- 4 tablespoons liquor (rum, Cointreau, etc.)
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon peel

Powdered sugar for decoration

Whipping cream, optional

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Butter a non-stick spring baking pan. Grind poppyseeds into a paste and separate egg yolks and whites. Beat yolks, sugar, and butter, until smooth and creamy.

Beat the egg whites until stiff and fold into the poppy seed batter carefully. Pour batter into the pre-buttered baking pan.

Bake for approximately 40 to 45 minutes. (Poke lightly at center of the pan with a toothpick - if nothing sticks it is done.) Let cool.

Place upside down on a large dish and release from pan. Sprinkle lightly with powdered sugar.

(Aside: this recipe was given to me by a congregant, Aliza Chazani with this note: "My great aunt Emma Horowitz was born in 1885 in Marienbad, Czech Republic.

A copy of her recipe survived with my Aunt Evelyn, who salvaged the family recipe book as she escaped from Prague before WWII.

Emma's kosher torte was the highlight of every Passover Seder. She baked it only once a year, and the poppy seeds were imported from Turkey, making it even more special and exotic."



Sweet and Spicy Pecans

- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 teaspoons brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon maple sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Pinch of salt

2 cups pecans

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. In saucepan, melt butter over low heat. Stir in brown sugar, maple sugar, cayenne, cinnamon and salt. Mix well, and stir in the pecans until they are evenly coated with the other ingredients.

Spread the pecans on a baking sheet. Bake for 15 minutes, stirring the pecans every five minutes to keep them from sticking or burning. Let cool before eating.



Ravenous Ravens



**Traditional Italian Ciambellette
Recipe via Ghila Sanders**

Note –this is the recipe as passed down in our family and reflects the kashrut of our community. If you have questions or concerns about its suitability for your own family's table because of the use of flour, we recommend consulting with your rabbi.

Ingredients

3 eggs

½ cup extra virgin olive oil

¾ cup sugar

2 cups flour (approximately)

Zest from one orange and one lemon

A pinch of salt

Preparation

Pre-heat the oven at 350 degrees.

Set a timer for 18 minutes. Make sure work-spaces are clean and there is no flour on any surface.

Beat eggs with sugar and oil, then add flour, salt, and zest. The dough should not stick but be smooth and workable.

Roll pastry in circular strips ½ inch in diameter and 3-4 inches in length.

Shape like mini donuts.

All of this should be done BEFORE the timer goes off for the cookies to be in accordance to Jewish tradition.

Rabbi Frank Tamburello's column featuring Jewish holiday Eats and Treats

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and bake for 25-30 minutes, or until browned.



Serve on plate or in bowl

Ravenous Ravens



“New Age”

(nut-free, non-alcoholic) Passover Charoset

- 1/2 cup dried cranberries
- 1/2 cup dried cherries
- 1/3 cup seedless raisins
- 1/2 cup coarsely chopped mango slices
- 2 cups apples, coarsely chopped
- 3/4 cup water
- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 2 cups whole cranberries

Place everything in medium saucepan.

Over low heat, cook to soften apples and cranberries.

Adjust tartness to taste with more orange juice and some sugar if you wish.

Cook until mixture is thick. Mix well.

**Rabbi Frank Tamburello's column featuring
Jewish holiday Eats and Treats**

Pasta Sauce from Puglia

(Recipe from Jewish festival in Trani, Italy)

- 6 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 clove garlic crushed
- 2 ounces salted anchovies, chopped
- 2 large ripe tomatoes, chopped
- 2 ounces pitted black olives
- 30 capers
- Salt and pepper to taste

Pour olive oil in large frying pan. Add garlic and anchovies. Simmer 2 minutes and add tomatoes. Cook 10 minutes. Add olives, capers, salt and pepper. Simmer additional 5 minutes

10 oz. Thin spaghetti

Cook pasta according to directions. Drain, and add to frying pan. Stir well before serving.

Synagogue in Trani Italy continue on next page



Ravenous Ravens



**Rabbi Frank Tamburello's column featuring
Jewish holiday Eats and Treats**

Quinoa Pea Soup

Ingredients:

1 cup water
 1/2 cup quinoa, rinsed
 2 teaspoons canola oil
 1 medium onion, chopped
 2-1/2 cups frozen peas (10 ounces)
 2 cans (14-1/2 ounces each) reduced-sodium chicken broth or vegetable broth
 1/2 teaspoon salt
 1/4 teaspoon pepper
 Optional toppings: Plain yogurt, croutons, shaved Parmesan cheese and cracked pepper

Directions

In a small saucepan, bring water to a boil. Add quinoa. Reduce heat; simmer, covered, until water is absorbed, 12-15 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a large saucepan, heat oil over medium-high heat; saute onion until tender.

Stir in peas and broth; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, until peas are tender, about 5 minutes. Puree soup using an immersion blender.

Or cool slightly and puree soup in a blender; return to pan. Stir in quinoa, salt and pepper; heat through.

Serve with toppings as desired.



Of Trani's four synagogues, all transformed into churches in the 14th century, Santa Maria in Scolanova is the only one which, in 2005, was re-converted to its function as a synagogue.

The building has retained its original structure over the centuries: a rectangular hall raised above ground level, entered via an external staircase built against the south wall.

Inside, on the east wall, is the stone aedicule that housed the *aron*. Here, the floor is raised by three steps, and this is where the Christian altar was placed after the synagogue was turned into a church. A large hole was found in the floor of the basement, possibly a remnant of a ritual bath.

Today, the synagogue is managed by the [Jewish Community of Naples](#), of which Trani is a branch. It generally opens on various Jewish religious holidays, when the local Jewish community gathers here.

Ravenous Ravens



**Rabbi Frank Tamburello's column featuring
Jewish holiday Eats and Treats**

Jewish Tradition on Chametz and Kitniyot

By Rabbi Paul Kipnes and Rabbi Eric Berk

When was the last time you remembered something? Did you remember something that you had forgotten, or was it something you just hadn't thought about in a while? How did you remember?

Was it by seeing, thinking, smelling, tasting? What was the memory: hazy, blurry, sharp, clear? It isn't just scientists and biologists who know that memory is often a complex and complicated process.

Our ancient tradition and rabbis knew this as well, and put all their efforts into Passover. Therefore, something as seemingly simple as food becomes a trigger for memory, or a reminder of the past: our own past as well as our people's distant past as slaves under Pharaoh.

Perhaps, what first comes to mind when thinking of Passover's foods is Matzah. What is it, beyond "square," or "round"?

Boxes of Matzah – that plain, flat, and, well, plain unleavened bread – can most often be seen blocking the path of your shopping cart as you buy gefilte fish and other, tastier Pesach delicacies.

Most literally, Matzah is unleavened bread. Symbolically, it is most often seen as a symbol of freedom, that first food eaten by a newly freed people.

At the same time, Matzah is also the "bread of affliction," the bread of poverty. So simultaneously Matzah serves as a warning, or reminder, as well: our Jewish tradition does not equate freedom with wealth.

What is Chametz and Why Can't We Eat It?

Of course, we cannot have Matzah, unleavened bread, without its opposite: leaven, or chametz. You might find it surprising that the Torah is more stringent about chametz than any other forbidden food! Chametz refers to products made from wheat, barley, rye, oats, and spelt.

According to the Talmud (B. Pesachim 35a), these are the only grains from which Matzah can be made, and therefore, strictly speaking, the only ones which are subject to the Torah's prohibition of eating chametz, or leaven, on Passover.

If that helps describe chametz literally, how might we describe chametz symbolically? Have you ever watched dough rise in the oven, or have you ever just seen bread?

Dough rises, and what results is "puffed-up," bigger than before. Full of air – or perhaps full of itself. That is exactly what chametz has come to symbolize. Philo, a Greek-Jewish philosopher, described chametz as "pride," because leavened bread is "puffed-up."

Removing chametz on Passover from our homes, our lives, our families, is a struggle between who we really are now and who we can be once we strip away all the trappings of self-importance.

If chametz is so negative, why do we eat it all year? While it is oftentimes very difficult to be a Jew, the Jewish Tradition does not demand of us that which is impossible. Of course, Jewish Tradition doesn't prohibit the eating of Matzah after Passover either!

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Ravenous Ravens



What are Kitniyot and What are the Rules about Eating Kitniyot?

Just as chametz grows and grows (in the oven), so too did the category of chametz expand. For Ashkenazim (Jews of Eastern European descent), the tradition on Passover has been to not eat foods considered “Kitniyot,” which includes many legumes, as well as beans, peas, rice, millet, corn, and seeds.

There have been many reasons Ashkenazic communities refrained from eating Kitniyot. For example, there was a concern that because Kitniyot can be ground to make flour and then baked, one could mistakenly assume that their neighbor was eating chametz. Furthermore, there was concern that chametz grain might get mixed up with the kitniyot, if they were stored in close proximity.

This kitniyot prohibition was not accepted by most Sephardim (Jews of Spanish or Arab descent) – but that is not to say Sephardic observance of Passover has been any less meaningful than that of their Ashkenazic neighbors. Why is it, then, that many Jews who might not have done so in the past, now eat kitniyot during Passover?

In the recent past, two groups of rabbis have met and, independent of one another, ruled that both Ashkenazim and Sephardim should be permitted to eat rice, corn, and kitniyot during Pesach.

Who were these groups, and how did they determine such a ruling? The two groups were the Responsa Committee of the Reform Movement, and the Responsa Committee of the Israeli Conservative Movement. Each Responsum (or rabbinic decision) is available on the internet (Reform and Israeli Conservative).

Why do Two Groups of Rabbis Now Permit Eating Kitniyot on Passover?

Briefly, these rabbinical committees determined that the prohibition of eating of rice, beans and kitniyot is in direct contradiction to the opinion of all the sages of the Mishnah and Talmud (except one), and also contradicts the theory as well as the practice of more than fifty post-Talmudic Sages. Opposition to the ban on eating kitniyot began around the time of its inception in 13th century France, with one Rabbi calling the practice “a mistaken custom,” and the second rabbi calling it “a foolish custom”.

With regard to Halachah (Jewish law), the central question is this: whether it is permissible to do away with a mistaken or foolish custom. Many rabbinical authorities (including the Rambam, or Moses Maimonides) have ruled that it is permitted (and perhaps even obligatory!) to do away with this type of “foolish custom”. Furthermore, there are many good reasons to do away with this “foolish custom.”

A foolish custom...

1. Detracts from the joy of the holiday by limiting the number of permitted foods.
2. Causes exorbitant price rises, which result in “major financial loss,” and, as is well known, “The Torah takes pity on the people of Israel's money”.
3. Emphasizes the insignificant (legumes) and ignores the significant (the avoidance of chametz).
4. Can cause people to ridicule Jewish ritual in general and the prohibition against eating chametz in particular. One might think that if this custom prohibiting eating kitniyot has no purpose yet is observed, then perhaps there is no reason to observe other mitzvot.
5. Can even cause divisions between World Jewry's ethnic groups.

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Ravenous Ravens



May I Still Refrain from Eating Kitniyot if I Want To Do So?

On the other hand, there is only one reason to observe this custom: the desire to preserve an old custom. While this desire can be very strong, our rabbinic decisors agreed that this desire does not override all that was mentioned above.

However, there will be Ashkenazim who will want to stick to the "custom of their ancestors," and who will be drawn to that tradition, even though they know that it is permitted to eat kitniyot on Pesach. Remember, this too is permissible, especially in light of Reform Judaism's openness to all aspects of Jewish tradition.

Rabbi David Golinkin concluded the Israeli Conservative Movement's Responsum by stating that with a willingness to eat kitniyot on Pesach (Passover), "This will make their lives easier and will add joy and pleasure to their observance of Pesach."

It can become very easy to think that observing Pesach represents an unbearable burden: so much preparation, the need to give up chametz and instead eat Matzah – the list surely goes on. We must remember that Matzah is not only the "bread of affliction," but the symbol of freedom as well!

Increasing the Joy and Pleasure during Passover

Rabbi Golinkin ends his legal decision with an understanding and insightful directive. He notes that adding joy and pleasure to our observance of Pesach was probably not on our Passover shopping lists – and if it was, did it even make the top 10?

Rabbi Frank Tamburello's column featuring Jewish holiday Eats and Treats

Now we have an opportunity to prepare for Pesach with an additional item on our "to do" lists: adding joy and pleasure to our observance of Pesach.

May this be a meaningful Pesach for you and your loved ones!



Project Eternity: The Holocaust Remembered

The Jewish Holocaust Survivors, Cincinnati Chapter, conducted the 36 interviews during 1991 for "**Project Eternity**: The Holocaust Remembered. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum received the tapes of the interviews on August 2, 1993.

NOTE from shosh: Listed are 14 interviews including my cousins, Henry Carter and Edith Carter, and yes I knew all 36 of the survivors and their families.

Click on name to hyperlink to video.

[Oral history interview with David Levine](#)

Oral History | Accession Number: 1993.A.0093.1
| RG Number: RG-50.231.0001

Date interview: 1991 January 08

[Oral history interview with Joan Mermelstein](#)

Oral History | Accession Number: 1993.A.0093.2
| RG Number: RG-50.231.0002

Date interview: 1991 January 08

[Oral history interview with Ruth Levine](#)

Oral History | Accession Number: 1993.A.0093.3
| RG Number: RG-50.231.0003

Date interview: 1991 January 08

[Oral history interview with Henry Carter](#)

Oral History | Accession Number: 1993.A.0093.4
| RG Number: RG-50.231.0004

Date interview: 1991 February 06

[Oral history interview with Israel Seibert](#)

Oral History | Accession Number: 1993.A.0093.5
| RG Number: RG-50.231.0005

Date interview: 1991 February 06

[Oral history interview with Mary Kartal](#)

Oral History | Accession Number: 1993.A.0093.6
| RG Number: RG-50.231.0006

Date interview: 1991 February 06

[Oral history interview with Soma Rosenberg](#)

Oral History | Accession Number: 1993.A.0093.7
| RG Number: RG-50.231.0007

Date interview: 1991 February 27

[Oral history interview with Joseph Polaniecki](#)

Oral History | Accession Number: 1993.A.0093.8
| RG Number: RG-50.231.0008

Date interview: 1991 February 27

[Oral history interview with Roma Kaltman](#)

Oral History | Accession Number: 1993.A.0093.9
| RG Number: RG-50.231.0009

Date interview: 1991 February 27

[Oral history interview with Lou Weisser](#)

Oral History | Accession Number: 1993.A.0093.10
| RG Number: RG-50.231.0010

Date interview: 1991 April 06

[Oral history interview with Jesse Kropveld](#)

Oral History | Accession Number: 1993.A.0093.11
| RG Number: RG-50.231.0011

Date interview: 1991 April 06

[Oral history interview with Gerd Buchheim](#)

Oral History | Accession Number: 1993.A.0093.12
| RG Number: RG-50.231.0012

Date interview: 1991 April 06

[Oral history interview with Simon Czerkiewicz](#)

Oral History | Accession Number: 1993.A.0093.13
| RG Number: RG-50.231.0013

Date interview: 1991 April 25

[Oral history interview with Edith Carter](#)

Oral History | Accession Number: 1993.A.0093.15
| RG Number: RG-50.231.0015

Date interview: 1991 April 25

IFR Schmooze and NEWS

חזל טוב

To IFR Member Rabbi David and his wife Cantor Lee Degani on the birth of their third grandchild.



Roberta Wojcik

Moshe Ben Etel

Ari Ben Shoshanna



For a man:

מִי שֶׁבָּרַךְ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ אֲבֹהֵם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב, מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן דָּוִד
וְשָׁלֹמֹה, הוּא יִבְרַךְ אֶת (name) בֶּן (mother's name), בְּעֶבֶר
שֶׁ (name) בֶּן (father's name) יִתֵּן בְּלִי גִדּוֹר לְצִדְקָה בְּעֶבֶר, שֶׁבֶת
הִיא מְלֻעֶזֶק וְרִפּוּאָה קְרוֹכָה לְבֹא, וְנֹאמֵר אָמֵן:

For a woman:

מִי שֶׁבָּרַךְ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ אֲבֹהֵם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב, מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן דָּוִד
וְשָׁלֹמֹה, הוּא יִבְרַךְ אֶת (name) בֵּת (mother's name), בְּעֶבֶר
שֶׁ (name) בֶּן (father's name) יִתֵּן בְּלִי גִדּוֹר לְצִדְקָה בְּעֶבֶר, שֶׁבֶת
הִיא מְלֻעֶזֶק וְרִפּוּאָה קְרוֹכָה לְבֹא, וְנֹאמֵר אָמֵן:

The IFR Lapel Pin was minted in 2020 in solid brass with an antique brass finish and black enamel. The pin is one inch across, and is available for IFR Members \$55.00 USD ships free in the continental USA, shipping rates are applied outside of the USA.

For Passover, I sent matzo to the Jews of Uganda. They've given me a gift as well. By Rabbi Dan Ornstein

My friend Jacob reaches out to me in Albany, New York, 7,677 miles from his home in Mbale, Uganda. He is seeking matzo for Passover and prayers for his community, known as the Abayudaya. I will mail the matzo to him before the holiday.

Abayudaya means "People of Judah" in Luganda, a Bantu language spoken widely in Uganda. Their ancestors adopted the Jewish religion a little over a century ago. Their founder, the political leader Semei Kakungulu, renounced his political work for the British Empire and started studying Judaism, gradually developing a full commitment to the religion in the 1910s, bringing along with him other members of his family and extended community who had been studying and practicing with him.

The Abayudaya have faithfully practiced Judaism since then, at times suffering terrible persecution, most notably in the 1970s under the dictatorship of Idi Amin. Amin banned Jewish religious observances, forcibly closed down synagogues and forbade the ownership of Jewish books and Jewish burials — all in an effort to force Uganda's Jews to stop being Jewish.

Since then, the Abayudaya have painstakingly rebuilt their community through profound faith and determination as well as help from Jewish communities throughout the world. Today there are an estimated 2,500 Abayudaya Jews in Uganda — about 97 of them in Jacob's village.

I met Jacob in 2022 through an online class on the biblical Cain and Abel story and the Holocaust that I was teaching. He later emailed me to tell me how intrigued he was by the way in which the story of the world's first murder can shed light on the ugly phenomenon of genocide.

Our friendship has evolved, entangled in a mind-bending paradox: In a fraction of a second, we can write or speak to each other with the miraculous technology of WhatsApp. But members of Jacob's isolated Jewish community can't do what Jews in the Western world



take for granted: stop by a corner store to buy a box of matzo, the chief symbol of freedom during the Passover holiday for the ritual Seder meal.

Before I met Jacob, my awareness of the Abayudaya Jews was proud but paternalistic and uninformed. I mainly focused on how my religious denomination, Conservative Judaism, was instrumental in connecting this community to the rest of the Jewish people. Since the late '90s, the Conservative movement, along with others, has worked with the Abayudaya, providing support for their ongoing training in religious skills: leading prayers, reading from the holy scroll of the Torah, reading and speaking Hebrew and learning more about world Jewish history and current affairs from which the Abayudaya have been isolated.

The movement has also sought to assist the community with funding to spread the word about the presence of the Abayudaya community — for example, publishing a Passover Haggadah that incorporates the Abayudaya's story, music and liturgy.

What I failed to do was focus on getting to know the Abayudaya on their own terms and in their own right. Jacob's questions to me about the Bible and Jewish theology, and his reports to me about the Jews of Uganda, remind me that the Jewish experience goes far beyond the millions of white, North American Jews of Eastern European descent that we in the United States are used to, and even well beyond the millions of Sephardic Jews and Jews of Middle Eastern ethnic descent known as *mizrachi* -- Eastern Jews.

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Continued from page 15

Even though the lives of the Jews in Uganda and in other countries can be vastly different, we are all bound together through time and space by simple rituals like eating matzo.

Unleavened, flat and crumbly, matzo is referred to in the Hebrew Bible as the "bread of affliction and poverty."

At the Seder's opening, we point to the matzo and declare that this is the bread our Israelite ancestors ate as slaves in Egypt. And after we speak about our links to our ancestors comes the physical act:

We consume the matzo, assimilating into our bodies our empathy and solidarity with the poverty, hunger and oppression of our past. Yet we also look past this history of oppression to the hope we share with our fellow Jews also eating matzo throughout the world, in real time, on Seder night.

The Jews of Uganda are part of a community that dates back to the early 20th century, when political leader Semei Kakungulu started studying Judaism, gradually developing a full commitment to the religion and bringing along with him other members of his family and extended community.

Tarphon Kamyra

At the Seder we also declare: Let all who are hungry come and eat, let all who are needy celebrate freedom together. We make this declaration to our fellow Jews who need our help on the Seder night while also recognizing the universal hope that humanity will find the means to eradicate hunger everywhere.

As I stand in line at the post office with gift boxes of matzo, I reflect that the Abayudaya are giving me a Pass-over gift as well. Despite the pharaohs of their past and the challenges of their present, these Ugandan Jews — members of my worldwide Jewish community — evince a quiet yet fierce refusal to abandon Judaism.

Their steadfastness grants hope to all who wish to live in freedom, free of persecution. For me, that gift of hope is more precious than gold.



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Avoiding Trauma at the Seder Table
Aging Jewishly – What Our Traditions Tell
Us about Growing Old
By Rabbi Barbara Aiello

With the “good dishes” gracing the table, wine glasses gleaming and places set for 26 guests, the annual Passover seder was, as PopPop pronounced, “ready for prime time.” But in seconds the tranquility of the evening was disturbed by the shrieks of the two youngest granddaughters.

“It’s my turn to put the parsley on the plates,” said granddaughter Keeley.

“Uh Uh, No way. That’s the job I always do,” was granddaughter Naomi’s response.

“Well, I’m in charge of the parsley this year!” Keeley yelled.

“No way.” Naomi shot back. The girls continued what was escalating into a big fight until Bubby intervened.

“Girls, Girls, this year like we always do, we’ll be dipping parsley in salt water but this year we have a Sefardic family joining us so we’ll be dipping celery in vinegar as well. There’s no need to fight. You both have jobs to do.”

That’s when PopPop looked up from his iPad and commented, “I wish all of our family quarrels could be resolved so easily. Some of our seder dinners turned into battle grounds. Frankly I don’t look forward to family gatherings so much anymore.”

Bubby agreed. “Remember last Passover. When we got to the Ten Plagues and our son wanted to go around the table a second time to list modern day plagues ...”

“Oy vey, what a mess! When politics got into the mix we almost had a fistfight at the table! What’s it going to be like this year?”

Bubby and PopPop’s concerns are not unique. In recent years, controversy, particularly political concerns, have dominated traditional family gatherings – so much so that sociology and psychology experts have devoted hours of counseling time and pages in professional journals to the issue of contention around the family table.

According the online news service, Health Partners, “Scientific research shows that we need healthy relationships in order to be in good health,” and specifically hu-

mans need social support – that special connection with other people “who make you feel loved, heard and cared about.” However when social support is damaged or even absent, family gatherings, like Easter dinner or the Passover seder can deteriorate into a battleground where old grievances surface, where generational differences provoke misunderstandings and where differing values and opinions can ignite conflict.

Just ask Andrea M. Darcy, whose article “How to Survive a Family Gathering Emotionally Intact,” appeared recently (January 2023) on the Harley Therapy Mental Health Blog. Thanks to Ms. Darcy her counseling initiatives have resulted in seven steps to diffuse negativity when families come together.

1) “Show Up Neutral” – Ms. Darcy cautions that even “If there are any lingering disagreements between you and your family members and you show up “charged”, with either anxiety, anger, or righteousness,” you have created fertile ground for having a difficult time.

2) “Don’t create triangles.” Darcy explains that “triangles” is a group dynamics term that “refers to what happens when two people disagree, and one person pulls a third bystander into the situation ... that creates an “us against them,” energy that can snowball into a full blown argument.” Instead Darcy advises that “There is nothing wrong with disagreeing with someone in your family. But disagree by yourself.”

3) “Lower your expectations.” Says Darcy, emphasizing that “The less you expect from a family gathering, the more likely you are to enjoy yourself.”

4) “Stop judging yourself.” Ms. Darcy offers the example of the daughter who beat herself up for snapping at her father after he began his usual pattern of hurtful teasing. Alternately it is less painful to hold reasonable expectations of your family and of yourself, acknowledging that no gathering is perfect.

5) “Stick to one time zone,” Says Ms. Darcy, who emphasizes the obvious when she says, “The problem with families is that we all go way, way back. And this means we can spend every family gathering noticing what our family members do wrong ‘just like always.’” A focus on the present rather than past annoyances allows family members to ignore past hurts and slights and enjoy the present moment as best they can.

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6) **“Save it for Later.”** Is Ms. Darcy’s advice regarding the cumulative nature of years of family turmoil. She reminds us that the family gathering is rarely the place to sort out lingering issues “once and for all.” For serious issues Darcy recommends professional support.

7) **“When in doubt, use your ears.”** Darcy believes that listening is key and notes that listening is perhaps the most underrated way to avoid overacting and thus to improve relationships. Rather than nodding one’s head in agreement while thinking about a million other unrelated issues, actively listening requires staying in the “now,” and reflecting back certain key phrases and pointed comments that demonstrate that the other person has been heard and understood.

Where families are concerned, conflict is a given. In fact our Jewish traditions acknowledge that it is normal for family members disagree. As a midrash emphasizes, “Even a father and son, when they sit to study Torah together become enemies to one another. But they do not move from there until they have become beloved to one another.” Here’s hoping that none of us leaves the seder table until we’ve reestablished respect, compassion and the bonds of love.

NOTE: *Link to the complete article by Andrea Darcy:* <https://www.harleytherapy.co.uk/counselling/family-gathering-tips.htm>

For ten years Rabbi Barbara Aiello served the Aviva Campus for Senior Life as resident rabbi. Her most popular columns are now published in her new book, “Aging Jewishly,” available on Amazon books.

She is a founding member of the International Federation of Rabbis and newsletter co-editor. She serves on the board of Kulanu, an international organization that supports lost and emerging Jewish communities.

Rabbi Barbara now lives and works in Italy where she is rabbi of Italy’s first Reconstructionist synagogue. Contact her at Rabbi@RabbiBarbara.com



Let’s “Dish” About the Seder Plate!

In ancient times our sages taught that in anticipation of the Passover holiday, we Jews should prepare a specially made, large wicker container in which to place Passover’s symbolic foods. This wicker container would then be displayed on the seder table.

That’s right. The first seder plate wasn’t made of china or ceramic, pewter or silver – it was more like a wicker basket. And it most likely wasn’t round. In fact historians tell us that the actual name was “*ke’arah*” which is the Hebrew word, not for “plate” but for “tray.”

We find the first mention of what was to become the central focus of the seder table, the plate or the “*ke’arah*,” in the Mishnah. Written in about the third century CE, the Mishnah, which is the earliest compilation of Jewish Oral Law, features most of the rituals and prayers required for the Passover seder including directions for preparing what has become known as the seder plate.

Later, during the medieval period when Ashkenazi Jews began to write and publish “*haggadot*,” (the booklet used at the Passover seder to explain the meaning of the Exodus from Egypt), drawings of a large, round seder plate began to appear in the illustrations. However, the *haggadot* published by the Sephardi Jews of Spain, Portugal, Italy, as well as in the Middle East, often depicted the seder plate as the traditional wicker basket.

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But before long Sephardi Jewish communities whose artisans had learned to create ceramic art moved away from the wicker basket and in 15th century Spain began to craft large ceramic plates replete with illustrations highlighting not only Jewish but Islamic culture as well. Thus the Passover Seder Plate as an art form was born.

In 18th-century Germany, Jews who were asked to make seder plates made of pewter began to add engraved illustrations, Hebrew phrases and inscriptions to the plates themselves, while wealthy families in 18th and 19th century Germany commissioned ornate silver plates that featured intricately engraved scenes from the *haggadah*.

Later on Jewish artisans were commissioned to create a three-tiered seder plate with a special opening designed to contain the three pieces of *matzah*, the unleavened bread that was carried by Jewish women during our escape from slavery in Egypt.

Today seder plates are often passed down in families, from grandparents, to parents to children, and in some cultures the plate itself makes a grand entrance to the seder table.

In Morocco the seder plate is brought to the Passover table with great ceremony. Covered with a beautiful transparent cloth, the plate is carried by the seder leader as the assembled guests greet its arrival with a joyful song.

In Tunisia, Southern Italy and the islands of Sicily and Sardinia the seder plate is also welcomed with great aplomb as it is carried to the table by the “lady of the house.” It is customary that she then holds the plate over the head of the seder leader who then takes the plate and standing behind each guest, holds the plate over each person’s head.

The seder begins in this manner to demonstrate that although we were once slaves in Egypt and carried heavy burdens on our heads, today we are free to choose to “carry” the seder plate, a symbol of the precious gift of freedom.



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