



The Bulletin

Riverdale Temple

מִמְזֶרַח שֶׁמֶשׁ עַד מְבֹאוֹ מְהֵלֵל שֵׁם יי

*From the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof,
the name of the Eternal One is to be praised.*

Worship Services (also see p. 6)

Fridays

- April 4** 5:30 p.m. Tot Shabbat
6:15 p.m. Family Shabbat Service
- April 11** 6:15 p.m. Shabbat Eve Service
- April 18** 6:15 p.m. Shabbat Eve Service (no Tot Shabbat)
- April 25** 6:15 p.m. Shabbat Eve Service, followed by Book Club discussion

Saturdays

- April 5** 10:30 a.m. Shabbat Morning Service
- April 12** 10:30 a.m. Shabbat Morning Service
- April 19** 10:30 a.m. Shabbat Morning Service, followed by Chavurah
- April 26** 10:30 a.m. Shabbat Morning Service; **Aliya Hyman** Bat Mitzvah celebration

Passover

- Tuesday, April 15**, 10:30 a.m. Passover Festival Services
- Monday, April 21**, 10:30 a.m. Seventh Day Passover Festival Services with Yizkor

Women's Seder Tuesday, April 1

Mitzvah Day Sunday, April 6

Second Night Seder Tuesday, April 15

Save the Dates

Friday, April 25

Discussion of Ari Shavit's Book *My Promised Land* following Friday Service (Sponsored by WRJ)

Sunday, May 18

Student Sponsorship Breakfast

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No. 8

THE RABBI'S COLUMN

The Miracles of Yom Kippurim

A minor, or perhaps not so minor, miracle took place at Riverdale Temple on Purim this year. And actually, it may have been three separate miracles—or perhaps four. Here's how I see it.

First of all, someone had the lovely idea to enable us to fulfill two Purim commandments at once: giving "tzedakah" and sending "mishloach manot." All you had to do was write a check out to Riverdale Temple Women of Reform Judaism, and a lovely basket filled with all sorts of goodies—many of them homemade—would be sent to whomever you requested. The option was also offered to send a "shalach manos" (in the Yiddish/Ashkenazic pronunciation) to every member of the congregation. Thankfully, several people took advantage of that option, and the mishloach manot project was a success. To outsiders, it sure looked like a miracle—effortless. You wrote out a check, and "voila"—this beautiful bag was delivered to your friends. But for the people who made those lovely gift bags, it involved hours and hours of shopping, baking, sorting, stuffing, addressing, and delivering. It's not the bags that are the miracle; it's those dedicated, talented, patient, devoted women who put those bags together. If we need to be convinced of some divine presence in our world, check out the kinds of things they do for others!

That all occurred before Purim even arrived. But other things had been happening in the temple well in advance of Purim also. Anyone who spends any time here during the week or on a weekend might have run into some or all of the "Riverdale Players" faithfully rehearsing their lines, singing their songs, marking out their staging, directing, costuming, or any of the other often unseen tasks that go into making the Riverdale Temple Purimspiel more popular than any other event that goes on here, save the High Holy Days (and more popular than the second day of Rosh Hashanah). So, when Erev Purim came along, the sanctuary was filled to capacity. But that, in itself, wasn't the miracle. That happens every year for Purimspiel. What was miraculous—to me, at least—was the diversity of ages in that sacred room. And not just the diversity—from infants (one even on the bimah!) to great-grandparents. All the generations were well represented. If you asked me which group was the majority, I honestly could not tell you. I saw families from our nursery school,

continued on p. 3

our religious school, families with teenagers, empty nesters, and on up, all sitting together—and all acting together on the bimah. That was the miracle! Our entire Junior Choir and several of our older students took part in the opening number and the finale. And twice as many children had actual roles in the spiel this year than last. And I don't think there was any diminishing of quality. I have to say, over the past eight years, it's been exciting for me to watch some of our students grow into their roles. Funny how the adult cast members never seem to get any older, though. There must be some secret youth elixir that comes with being involved in the Purimspiel! And, of course, none of this would have happened without the annual efforts of our Purimspiel author and expert. (I'm not naming **any** names in this column because so many people were involved in all the festivities that I would surely omit several key individuals—but I'm going to trust that everyone knows of whom I speak—and if you don't, it can only mean that you haven't been to a Purimspiel! You have no idea what you're missing.)

I especially want to thank the Riverdale Players for editing the spiel down to something even our youngest members could sit through. That part was no miracle—that was hard work, generously devoted to making the Purimspiel accessible to all. And it worked. The children were still talking about it the next morning!

But I'm getting ahead of myself. The next miracle was the party that followed the spiel. I know that a good deal of anxiety went into making sure there would be enough food (oy, was there enough food!). And careful thought went into the tables, the music, the decorations, the activities in the west lounge for the youngest children, and on and on. But I don't think anyone could have really predicted what a wonderful, fun-filled, relaxed, entertaining, and once again diverse evening it was. The food was delicious and the company was delightful. I couldn't imagine a more successful party.

The final Purim miracle happened the next morning, in the same room, different cast. Our religious school began the

morning in the sanctuary with a song the seventh grade had written to the tune of "Let It Be"—reconfigured as "Let Me Sleep"—bemoaning the early hour of Sunday school. They were a hoot! We even went through an almost complete Megillah reading again, and then we headed downstairs to a "pop-up" carnival. Some of the classes had created booths, and our extraordinary faculty took charge and created a carnival out of next to nothing. The most popular booth, of course, was the "eat your way up a Twizzler to the Marshmallow Fluff" (I'm not sure what the Purim metaphor was for that, but the students loved it), and shaving Haman balloons, tossing bean bags, throwing a die, and musical chairs—with music provided by our cantor and her guitar, Chocolate—also enjoyed a steady stream of participants. I have to thank the gentleman who agreed to staff the prize table, even if he did start handing out cups of shaving cream once the prizes were all gone! But it was our teachers who really made the day fun for the whole school. Let me put in a plug for a future event here: each year we have a Student Sponsorship Breakfast (this year on May 18) to help offset the cost of running our religious school. I hope that every member of the congregation will attend—not only to support the school financially, but also to get to know these incredible teachers who share their love of Judaism so generously with our children.

Purim, as our students have learned, is not a major holiday. There are virtually no prohibitions, and only four commandments one is supposed to observe (and I believe our congregation observed all four of them quite enthusiastically this year). Nevertheless, the rabbis made a connection between Purim and Yom Kippur—thought by most to be the holiest day, with the greatest number of obligations to observe. They cited the biblical name "Yom Kippurim"—and interpreted it to mean a day "like" (Hebrew *k'*) Purim. There's no room to explain the many implications of that connection for the moment, but suffice it to say that our goal should be to make every holiday a "Yom Kippurim" at Riverdale Temple from now on!

—Rabbi Judith Lewis

THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Guest Columnist **Olivia Koppell**, Vice President of Riverdale Temple

Spring might be struggling to make its presence felt, but Riverdale Temple "emerged" from "hibernation" with renewed vigor and creativity. This year's activities around Purim were so enjoyable. First there were the Mishloach Manot "baskets" of goodies that were fit for Ahashveros's palace! Ronni Stolzenberg and Rachel Radna spearheaded the effort—and with their team of bakers, shoppers, and wrappers created the most delicious and appealing goodies. Many people chose to send a bag to every member of the congregation—a great way to raise funds while "toasting" your friends. Kudos to the Mishloach Manot Mavens: Rachel and Ronni, Susan Birnbaum, Sherrill Spatz, Helen Krim, Dorothy Kay, and Ronna Weber.

Then of course came the Megillah reading, the *Guys and Dolls Purimspiel*, and the Purim Party to top it off. The

sanctuary was filled with revelers and the rabbi was able to "save" our cantor from "going astray" and bring her back into the "fold." This was an intergenerational musical: the junior choir, the Religious School kids, and the grown-up kids. Everyone did an amazing job, and it could not have succeeded without the guidance and inspiration of Helen Krim, J. B. Barricklo, and Carrie and Rudy Radna. For those who missed it, be sure to be there next year. After the final bow and some wine tasting, the party continued downstairs, thanks to Elaine Katz and the WRJ, who did a great job of creating family fun. The costumes were wonderful, introduced by our own MC, David Greenfield.

The Women's Seder (April 1) is another Riverdale Temple special offering. It is a unique event, not to be missed. And the Second Night Seder is another way to enjoy family and friends sharing a meaningful ritual (April 15). New this year: a matzah brei, bimuelos, huevos haminados Passover brunch on April 20, 11:00 a.m., sponsored by WRJ (see p. 6).

The YIVO lecture on March 30 focused on how the women of Eastern Europe, our grandmothers and great-grandmothers, faced the emerging modernity impinging on their lives. The YIVO lectures are an amazing source of information and understanding of our heritage. The rabbi is also starting an eight-session class on the evolving Jewish God.

Soon, River Spirit Music will be presenting a series of musical revues for our enjoyment right here in our ballroom. Other coming attractions are the Men' Club and WRJ activities,

Mitzvah Day, the Book Club, Lunch and Learn, and, not be missed, the Student Sponsorship Breakfast on May 18.

Riverdale Temple is blossoming like the flowers. Come and bring friends to enjoy all that we have to offer. Life is challenging and more complex than ever, so take advantage of the RT spiritual "safety net" and join in on some of the activities and services ... if only because it's actually fun.

Wishing everyone a wonderful Passover celebration.

—Olivia Koppell

Women's Seder Tuesday, April 1, 7:00–9:00 p.m.

Join the women in our community as we read the story of our people's exodus from the women's perspective. Bring your daughters and granddaughters. A wonderful experience of women's power!

Reservations are a must: \$40 per person \$12.50 for children under 12

Pay online at www.riverdaletemple.org (enter Women's Seder in the menu line) or bring a check payable to "WRJ/Riverdale Temple."



THE SECOND NIGHT PASSOVER SEDER at Riverdale Temple

Please join us for our annual Feast of Freedom-the Second Night Passover Seder

Tuesday, April 15, at 6:30 p.m.

The temple will provide everything for the Seder, including wine, Haggadah, and dinner.*

Why spend Passover alone? If you want to share the experience of a Second Night Seder with your family and friends, with no work on your part, come to ours! Rabbi Judith S. Lewis will lead the Seder, and we will share in the reading of the Haggadah, sing Passover songs, and eat a delightful kosher meal.

*All food will be kosher; but strict Orthodox kosher for Passover rules are not followed.

This event is open to the community!

Reservations (paid in advance, only) are absolutely necessary to assist our planning.

\$40 per adult

\$15 per child ages 5-12 age

4 and under, free

Please call the temple at 718-548-3800, ext. 1, and leave a message, or contact us via e-mail at rivtemple@aol.com



Notice to All Members

The Nominating Committee has sent out a mailing to the entire congregation explaining the nomination procedures for our upcoming elections for all temple officers (president; three vice presidents; treasurer; financial secretary; assistant financial secretary; and recording secretary) as well as three vacant Board seats. Nomination forms are included in the mailing, with a return due date of April 17. We appreciate your prompt return of nomination forms and look forward to seeing you at the annual congregational meeting in June.



An Opportunity to Share!

Perhaps you want to honor a birthday, an anniversary, commemorate a

Yahrzeit, or share Shabbat with our congregation!

Call the office at 718-548-3800, ext. 0, and leave a message for Irene Brenner.



Learn to Skate at Van Cortlandt Park Ice Rink Skating School Just for You!

All levels, ages four and up, every Sunday, 10:00 am-10:30 am, 11/17/13 to 3/9/14

Contact Cheryl Hunt, chunt@vcpicerink.com for details

5900 Broadway, Bronx, NY 10471

Bulletin Board

April Events

Women's Seder	April 1
Membership Committee Meeting	April 3
Mitzvah Day	April 6
Second Night Seder	April 15
Matzah Brei Brunch Cook-Off	April 20
Book Club Discussion	April 25

Coming Up in May

"Evolution of the Jewish God" with Rabbi Lewis	May 1
(continues on Thursdays through June)	
YIVO lecture	May 4
Student Sponsorship Breakfast	May 18

Dates are subject to change. Go to www.riverdaletemple.org for changes.

Rabbi Lewis would greatly appreciate hearing from members of the congregation who may be facing health issues or other emotional stresses and might welcome a pastoral visit or phone conversation. Please call her at 718-548-3800, ext. 4, if there is any way in which she can provide assistance.



Copy for the next issue of The Bulletin is due by April 15. You can e-mail it directly to [rivtemple@aol.com](mailto:rivotemple@aol.com) (put "Bulletin" in subject line).

Caring Committee

When you become aware of a member's illness or accident, or a fellow congregant's passing, PLEASE call the office or e-mail [rivtemple@aol.com](mailto:rivotemple@aol.com) promptly with details, including the person's relationship to you or others. This will enable the Caring Committee to take action accordingly.

Visit our new and improved website at www.riverdaletemple.org

Join Us on Facebook!

Did you know that Riverdale Temple has a Facebook page? Find us by searching for "Riverdale Temple Bronx, NY" on Facebook and join this page by clicking on "like." This is a space where we can exchange ideas, blog, discuss events, share photos, etc., and strengthen our bonds as a community. Join and make our numbers grow.

To Send a Contribution to Riverdale Temple

Send your donation to Riverdale Temple, 4545 Independence Avenue, Bronx, NY 10471. Please make your check payable to Riverdale Temple. Give the name/category/event to which your donation applies. We now accept payment by credit card; call the office (718-548-3800, ext. 0) or go to www.riverdaletemple.org.

Also support Riverdale Temple by buying a mug for just \$10.

Riverdale Temple	Rabbi	4	
Telephone Extensions	Cantorial Intern	5	
(718-548-3800)	Emergencies	7	
Temple Office	0 or 1	General Information	8
Bookkeeper	2	Other	9
Nursery School	3		

Registry of Holocaust Survivors

If you are a Holocaust survivor or the family member of a survivor, you can register to be included in the Benjamin and Vladka Meed Registry of Holocaust Survivors, at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. For more information and to download the Survivors' Registry Form, go to www.ushmm.org/remembrance/registry. Send the completed form to Registry of Holocaust Survivors, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, SW, Washington, DC 20024-2126; tel: 202-488-6130; fax: 202-314-7820; e-mail: registry@ushmm.org.

Riverdale Temple House Committee

Our mission is to ensure that the building and grounds of our synagogue best respond to the spiritual, educational, cultural, and social needs and activities of our congregation. We are concerned about safety, cleanliness, comfort, and appearance and maximizing the functionality of our facilities. The committee works closely with the maintenance staff to ensure that the facilities are well managed and meet the needs of our community efficiently and economically. The committee benefits from members with varied experience in facilities management, engineering, construction, and related fields. If you are willing to join the committee, please contact Helen Krim at helen.krim@gmail.com.

If you need transportation to and from services at the temple, please call the office at 718-548-3800, ext. 0 or 1, to make arrangements.



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Friday Evening and Saturday Morning Services, Passover Services

The first Friday night service, which begins at 6:15 p.m., is called Family Shabbat, aims to be a lively service filled with songs and stories, and is directed primarily at families with young children. As in the past, it will feature our Junior Choir and will be followed by a potluck dinner. Our other Friday night services also begin at 6:15 p.m. with a Kabbalat Shabbat, in which the special series of Psalms that usher in Shabbat will be sung, followed at 6:30 p.m. by the formal evening service.

Friday, April 4	5:30 p.m.	Tot Shabbat
	6:15 p.m.	Family Shabbat with Junior Choir, followed by potluck dinner
Saturday, April 5	10:30 a.m.	Shabbat Morning Service
Friday, April 11	5:45 p.m.	Rehearsal of the Adult Volunteer Choir
	6:15 p.m.	Shabbat Eve Service
Saturday, April 12	10:30 a.m.	Shabbat Morning Service
Tuesday, April 15	10:30 a.m.	Passover Festival Services
Friday, April 18	6:15 p.m.	Shabbat Eve Service (no Tot Shabbat: school vacation)
Saturday, April 19	10:30 a.m.	Shabbat Morning Service; Chavurah following service
Monday, April 21	10:30 a.m.	Seventh Day Passover Festival Services with Yizkor
Friday, April 25	6:15 p.m.	Shabbat Eve Service with Professional Choir, followed by Book Club discussion
Saturday, April 26	10:30 a.m.	Shabbat Morning Service; Aliya Hyman's Bat Mitzvah celebration

Do you have something you'd like to discuss with Rabbi Lewis but do not have the time to come in and meet with her personally? Send her a message through our website at <http://riverdaletemple.org/community-rd/conversation-with-rabbi-lewis>. While you are there, stop by our "virtual water cooler" too or take a look at some great pictures!

The next meeting of the Riverdale Temple Membership Committee is on Thursday, April 3, at 7:30 p.m.

Riverdale Temple presents the Great Matzah Brei/ Bimuelos (Sephardic version) Brunch Cook-Off Sunday, April 20, at 11:00 a.m.

Matzah Brei, bimuelos, huevos haminados (roasted eggs), and more, and all for only \$15/person, \$5/child

Pay online at www.riverdaletemple.org or send check to WRJ.



NURSERY SCHOOL NEWS



The nursery school has been full of laughter and learning this past month! We enjoyed wearing our costumes during our school-wide Purim celebration and loved noshing on our hamantaschen. We are excited to welcome our families and friends to our Spring/Passover breakfast party on Friday, April 11, at 9:00 a.m. and invite all the

Riverdale Temple members to join us too as we sing songs and eat matzah together.

Registration is also taking place for the 2014-2015 school year, and we encourage interested families to call now to schedule a tour of the school, as classes are filling up quickly.

Lastly, our search committee is accepting resumes for the director position, and we hope to begin interviews soon (see below).

—Laurie Steinmetz

Riverdale Temple Nursery School (RTNS), in Riverdale, New York, is a nursery school committed to Jewish traditions and values and creative learning experiences in a warm and welcoming environment. We seek a creative, resourceful, and dynamic **director** who will provide leadership and vision to our school. We are looking for someone with expertise in early childhood development, organization and collaboration, and school and business management. The ideal candidate must also be enthusiastic about fostering relationships within and among the RTNS community and must see her or himself as essential to our goal of integrating RTNS families into the larger Riverdale Temple community. Qualifications include a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or related field of study, New York State Education Department Teacher Certification in early childhood education or equivalent certification, and a minimum of two years of experience as a group teacher in a program for children under six years of age. For more details, including a complete job listing, please send your resume and cover letter to rtnsdirector@gmail.com.

RELIGIOUS AND HEBREW SCHOOL

Only two more months of Religious School and Hebrew School! This year has flown by.

The month of April brings, of course, the most beloved festival of the Jewish year. It also, traditionally, brings Mitzvah Day at Riverdale Temple. Because Passover comes right in the middle of the month, this year Mitzvah Day and the Religious School Model Seder both fall on Sunday morning, April 6. Have no fear—we have worked out a way to have them complement each other. Families are urged to join us for the whole morning. We will begin our day by participating in the Mitzvah Day activities. Our students are quite adept at sorting clothing, packing toiletries, and making sandwiches for POTS. As soon as they have completed those acts of “gemilut hasadim” (loving-kindness), we will gather

in the social hall for our annual Model Seder. This is not the conventional school Seder, where each class reads through a section of the Haggadah. This is a Seder filled with songs and games and drama. Parents are welcome to sit behind their children and observe, help with the singing, assist in pouring grape juice, and tend to any younger siblings they’d like to bring along. (We do ask that parents not provide any unfair assistance to our students as they attempt to remember what they are packing for their trip out of Egypt.)

I look forward to celebrating with you this month!

—Rabbi Lewis

P.S. Please put Sunday morning, May 18, on your calendar! It’s the day of the Student Sponsorship Breakfast, and we have some very, very special plans this year.

	Calendar April		May	
		13 No School—Passover Break		18 Religious School—Student Sponsorship Breakfast
		15 No School—Passover Break	4 Religious School	
1	Hebrew School	20 No School—Passover Break	6 Hebrew School (Yom Ha’atzmaut)	
6	Religious School	22 No School—Passover Break	11 Religious School	
8	Hebrew School	27 Religious School	13 Hebrew School (Last Day)	
		29 Hebrew School		



April 26

Aliya Nicole Hyman is a seventh grade student at RKA middle school. She is an avid reader and loves and is loved by her family and friends. Her two most precious things in life, as she would say, are having a good heart and a smart brain. Aliya aspires to pursue something in life that helps people.

Bat Mitzvah Celebration

Steve Altarescu, our former rabbinic intern and a super teacher, is our new youth group leader. All post-b’nai mitzvah high school students are eligible. The group meets on Saturday afternoons. Please e-mail Rabbi Lewis at rabbijudithslewis@gmail.com if you’d like to get involved.

ADULT EDUCATION

We are fortunate to have as the spiritual leader at Riverdale Temple a rabbi who can share with us her deep knowledge about Judaism, its origins, its practices, and the issues, people, and ideas that influenced and shaped our identities as Jews. We are pleased to announce that starting in May we will be inaugurating a series of classes led by Rabbi Lewis to help us delve into key areas of how Judaism evolved and to learn more about our Jewish faith.

Rabbi Lewis will launch a series of classes, beginning on Thursday evenings for eight weeks, starting on Thursday, May 1, from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. The class will meet in the social hall.

This initial course, “The Evolution of the Jewish God,” explores the origins of Judaism. The rabbi describes the course content as follows:

The God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and even Moses is very different from the God of Saadia or Maimonides, and the

God of the medieval scholars is very different from the God of the Kabbalah, which is different still from the God of the moderns—Hermann Cohen, Leo Baeck, Mordecai Kaplan, or Abraham Joshua Heschel. Needless to add, none of them agrees with any other! Judaism tells us very little about the God in whom we believe, beyond the fact that God cannot be more than One and can have no material existence. Each generation of Jews has struggled to find a vocabulary with which to articulate its theological quest, and each generation has found new concepts to integrate “The Divine” into its own reality.

Join us as we attempt to trace this evolution of the Jewish God—and to continue the process through our own explorations. We will continue our explorations with Rabbi Lewis in the 2014–2015 year through a series of courses, and we will announce the class topics in the fall.

YIVO Jewish Culture Series will present the third of the

series at Riverdale Temple for 2013–2014 on Sunday, May 4, at 2:00 p.m. in the sanctuary.

Rebecca Kobrin, the Russell and Bettina Knapp Assistant Professor of American Jewish History at Columbia University, will present a very interesting perspective about Jewish immigration to the United States from Eastern Europe (80 percent of American Jewry today is descended from Eastern Europe). She will address what factors influenced their decision to leave, where to go, and how they were able to finance their trips. We will learn about a most critical figure in the era, Sender Jarmulowsky (1868–1914), a ticket broker who facilitated the great immigrant influx from Jewish Eastern Europe and used his banks to personally sell hundreds of thousands of ship tickets to prospective migrants. His bank stood at the heart of the intricate business

networks of distribution in which migrants served as both paying customers and lucrative commodities.

Save the dates for these events presented early in May.

Lunch and Learn with Rabbi Lewis continues in April on Thursday, noon–1:00 p.m., except for the week of Passover. The classes, held in the rabbi's study, continue to examine *The Jewish Annotated New Testament* edited by Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Z. Brettler.

—Yvette Marrin, Ph.D., Chair, Adult Education Committee

The Chavurah will meet on **April 19** to read and discuss the special Torah readings for the Shabbat that falls during Passover.

—Ronna Weber, Ph.D.

SOCIAL ACTION

“OPEN HEARTS, OPEN MINDS” are the key themes for Riverdale Temple.

MITZVAH DAY 2014: Please open your hearts and minds and donate a couple of hours to help Riverdale Temple have a successful 2014 Mitzvah Day. We need your help with sorting clothing for Big Brothers/Big Sisters, making bagged lunches for Part of the Solution (for the homeless), and making grooming kits for people at the Atria Hospice and men who receive help from the Midnight Run.

You can also give back by helping to deliver Passover Packages through Bronx Jewish Community Council in the morning of April 6 or by helping to bring small plants and grooming kits to the Atria Hospice in the afternoon. We are also helping out at Schervier Nursing Facility with

their social hour and perhaps doing some planting of spring seeds, also in the afternoon.

We need your registration forms to help plan. You can contact David Currier or Frances Segan to help out.

You will receive much satisfaction giving time on Sunday, April 6.

KRMH GROCERY COLLECTION: Our April delivery date for Riverdale Temple grocery donation is Sunday, April 27, at 11:45 a.m.

Please continue to donate healthful groceries. With the rising cost of groceries, people need your help and support.

Thanks to those who have donated on an ongoing basis.

—Frances Segan, Ph.D., Chair, Social Action Committee

MEN'S CLUB

An Open Letter to the Members of Riverdale Temple
My Fellow Congregants,

This has been a year of some surprises, much happiness and sadness, and, as previously mentioned, some surprises. Among the many reasons for us to be happy have been the arrival of Amit Barry Sharett-Singer, the baby of Cantor Inbal and her husband Jonathan; the wonderful bar and bat mitzvahs that have taken place at Riverdale Temple this year; the noticeable increase in Shabbat service attendance; the “best ever” Purimspiel event created by Helen Krim; the enthusiastic and stimulating sessions of the Chavurah study group each month; and, of course, the many new temple members who have contributed much to the quality of life here at Riverdale Temple.

Things that are sorrowful include the loss of cherished family members, friends, congregants, neighbors, and others who have directly touched our lives; the extended illness of those we love and care for; the tragedies natural or otherwise that occur throughout the world and cause much death and injury. May the source of strength who blessed the ones before us help us find the courage to make our lives a blessing.

Now for some of the year's surprises. This year featured

an unusually bitter cold winter filled with snow, ice, and blustery winds and frigid cloud-filled days; a virtual unknown was elected mayor of New York City; William Bratton has returned as commissioner of the Police Department; and, finally, too many of you have forgotten to pay your annual **MEN'S CLUB DUES!** I URGE EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU WHO HAVE NOT YET SENT IN YOUR DUES TO PLEASE DO SO NOW. We are facing a significant shortage of revenue this year, and this may impact our ability to meet the financial commitments we have made to the RT community.

I ask that you make every effort to support the Men's Club to the best of your ability. If you are unable to pay the full amount (\$50.00), please send us whatever you are able to. There are many people in this community who count on the financial assistance of the Men's Club, and I do not want to disappoint anybody.

You can mail in your payment or simply drop it off at the main office.

PLEASE give this matter your **IMMEDIATE ATTENTION.**

Thank you and Shalom,

Steve Rosenfeld, President

Now that we survived the extreme weather, we will begin to see shoots of tulips and other spring flowers pushing their way up through the ground—they, too, survived the prolonged winter. I liken this scene to the members of WRJ, who continue on, no matter what obstacles they faced. We can and have raised our heads with pride and a sense of accomplishment during these cold months.

The party following the Purimspiel was exceptional. When you entered the Social Hall, you could feel a powerful sense of energy, community, and exuberance filling the room. Everyone was socializing and in good spirits. They were talking and cheering those folks who danced and rocked back and forth to the music of the karaoke. The diversity of the guests was heartwarming. We savored the hors d'oeuvres; filled our stomachs with Mediterranean and fruit salads; devoured the hamantaschen, all the while listening to the master of all masters of ceremonies, David Greenfield. He made certain each child wearing a costume felt important and special. His choice of music lent itself to dancing and singing. This year's party was memorable.

The Mishloach Manot (Purim bags) were so well received. Compliments about them were heartwarming. The dynamic energy while watching the women put the bags together was exciting and exhilarating—from the women of WRJ who conceived the idea, purchased the colorful bags, to the women who baked cookies, cake, and brownies, to those putting everything into the bags, delivering, or notifying each and every member of the congregation that they would receive their gift. They are to be commended and praised for completing this massive undertaking in a timely fashion. How they survived is beyond me, but they survived, as did the spring flowers.

Someone reminded me this gift was akin to receiving "a group hug." An older congregant said since most of her peers are ill, or have passed away, she felt lonely while attending the High Holy Day services. But, when she received her Mishloach Manot, she felt the love and warmth of her temple family. She was reminded that, as a member of Riverdale Temple, no person ever need be alone.

This is being written prior to April 1, the date the Women's Seder is to take place. A male congregant asked, "Why is there a Women's Seder?" I reminded him that the traditional Haggadah relegates women to the background in the Passover saga of Jewish liberation from Egyptian slavery. We hear no mention of the courageous midwives the Bible describes as having saved babies from destruction nor of the women preparing food under the harshest of conditions during the Exodus. But we do hear a great deal about the need for *men* to teach their *sons* the story of the Exodus. The same gentleman asked, "Why are there oranges on the table at the Women's Seder?" He was told the most familiar version of the story, as I know it. It's about Susannah Heschel, daughter of noted scholar Abraham Joshua Heschel. Ms. Heschel, while giving a speech about the ordination of women clergy, heard a man shout from the audience, "A woman belongs on the bimah like an orange belongs on the Seder plate."

During a visit to Oberlin College in the early 1980s, she read a feminist Haggadah that called for placing a piece of bread on the Seder plate as a symbol of the need to include gays and lesbians in Jewish life. Ms. Heschel liked the idea of putting something new on the Seder plate, but she was uncomfortable with using chometz to represent suppressed voices. Instead, she chose to add an orange and to interpret it as a symbol of all marginalized populations, which is the reason we now have oranges on our Seder plates.

After each Women's Seder, I realize how important it has been to have, during these past 10 years, both my granddaughters, Emma and Zoe, attend the Seders with me. It evoked conversations as to the responsibilities each generation (L'Dor V'Dor) has to the one before, and the one following them. We had discussions about the compelling voices of, and the contributions made by, Jewish women such as Emma Lazarus, Anne Frank, Chana Senish, and Golda Meir. Let's all find a way to have more than one generation at each table. We urge those of you who are thinking of attending to bring along your daughters, sisters, aunts, nieces, and your female neighbors.

We are planning to have an extended Kiddush in honor of Sisterhood conducting, along with Rabbi Lewis, the Sabbath service on Saturday, May 10.

A dinner acknowledging the paid-up members of WRJ will take place on Tuesday, May 13.

Save the Date: Annual Card Party Sunday, June 22, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

—Elaine Katz, Co-President

The April book club selection is *My Promised Land* by Ari Shavit. Its recent publication has garnered a lot of media attention and rave reviews: "[A] **must-read** book . . . [*My Promised Land*] is a real contribution to changing the conversation about Israel and building a healthier relationship with it.—**Thomas L. Friedman**, *The New York Times*

"The most extraordinary book that I've read on [Israel] since Amos Elon's book called *The Israelis*, and that was published in the late sixties."—**David Remnick**, on *Charlie Rose*

"Israel is not a proposition, it is a country. Its facticity is one of the great accomplishments of the Jews' history. . . . It is one of the achievements of Ari Shavit's **important and powerful** book to recover [that] feeling."—**Leon Wieseltier**, *The New York Times Book Review*

Instead of having a usual book club meeting to discuss this important bestseller, we will have a special oneg and talk led by Rabbi Lewis and sponsored by the WRJ following Friday night services on April 25. All are welcome.

Our next meeting will take place on May 27 at 7:30 p.m. The book we will discuss is *What We Talk about when We Talk about Anne Frank*. It is a collection of short stories by Nathan Englander, a talented young writer who comes from the Orthodox community in Hempstead, Long Island. His short fiction and essays have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, and *The Washington Post*.

—Ronni Stolzenberg

CONTRIBUTIONS

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Steven Hollander	Men's Club	Elaine Katz	Steven Katz, the dearest of sons, brother, uncle, and brother-in-law
Sherry L. Kassel	Rabbi Judith Lewis	Helen and Tom Krim	Marcia Meltzer, beloved mother of Helen Krim
Elaine Katz For the women who made this year's Purim holiday a huge success	WRJ	Mary Ellen Lyons	Elysse Gabrielle Roger, beloved niece
Linda Murray-Rodriguez and The Beacon Paraprofessional Association	Rebecca Frank and in memory of Albert Berman	David Roskind Jr.	Marti Roskind, beloved sister-in-law
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Kay and George Samalin Thank you for your generous Purim gift bag	Riverdale Temple	Ronna H. Weber	Max Trager, beloved father
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Condolences

To:
Susan Matluck and family

On the loss of
Norman Festinger, beloved father

The Departed Whom We Now Remember—April Yahrzeit Observances

- | | | | |
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Telephone: 718-548-3800 Fax: 718-543-1492

E-mail: rivtemple@aol.com

Web Page Address: www.riverdaletemple.org

Rabbi of the Congregation

Rabbi Judith S. Lewis

Rabbi Emeritus of the Congregation

Rabbi Stephen D. Franklin, D.D., D.H.L.

President of the Congregation

Dr. Rachel Radna

Organist/Director of Music

Arnold Ostlund Jr., B.Mus.

Nursery School Executive Director

Laurie Steinmetz

Bulletin Editor

Margaret Ross Griffel, Ph.D.

Bulletin Proofreaders

Susan Birnbaum, Sylvia Gottlieb, L. Michael Griffel,
Elaine Katz, Olivia Koppell,
Ruth Loebmann

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