



The Bulletin Riverdale Temple

מִמְזֶרְחַ שְׁמֶשׁ עַד מְבֹאוֹ מִהַלֵּל שֵׁם יי

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

Vol. 76

March 2023 (5783)

No. 7

THE RABBI'S COLUMN

Esther is famous for being the only book of the Bible that takes place completely in the diaspora, and also the only one that does not mention Gd. It is inextricably wrapped up with the holiday of Purim, which is always a joyful holiday. How can it be so joyful? The main theme is about a powerful man in government who wants to kill all the Jews. When he suggests this to the king, the king is not bothered in the least. He even rejects the money he was to be paid for the murder of the Jews. I can't help thinking about the show in Mel Brooks's movie *The Producers* when I think of Purim. We could describe the story of Esther as "A lighthearted romp about anti-Semitism and mass murder." Does this sound like a fun story?

One reason this is a joyous holiday might be, to quote another famous Zero Mostel role later played by Nathan Lane, "This time, it all turns out all right." Although that is true only for the Jews. For the Persians in the story, things do not work out so well.

When we tell the story in Purimspiels or in the service, we tone the story down quite a bit, since it is a holiday for children. But at the end of the Megillah, there is quite a bit of bloodshed. Of course, most of the people who die were not really characters in the story, except for Haman and his sons. Even so, it does seem a bit odd that the holiday is so lighthearted and fun.

Traditional celebrations of Purim include costumes, delicious foods, Purimspiels, and a lot of heavy drinking. In the Middle Ages, more than one Purim parade, with boisterous men and children hanging Haman in effigy, led to a pogrom from local non-Jews who mistook Haman for Jesus.

A close reading of the Book of Esther reveals why the holiday is so silly. It is because the Book of Esther is silly as well. It is full of exaggeration and hyperbole. Is there any reason to impale someone on a spike 50 cubits high? Does one celebrate a third anniversary with a party that lasts 180 days? Does one divorce a spouse because she did not come to a party?

The Book of Esther is a strange mixture of the horrible and the ridiculous, madcap adventures that end in death and destruction, and death and destruction that end in celebration and people politely sending gift baskets to their neighbors.

It all sounds very strange, but I wonder if it was not a bit more realistic than we realize. Not the absurdities and exaggerations, but in the juxtaposition of the horrible and the ridiculous. Life does contain its tragedies, but also has wild coincidences, some good, some bad. There

continued on p. 3

Worship Services (see calendar on p. 2 for details)

Fridays

Mar. 3	5:00 p.m.	Tot Shabbat
	7:00 p.m.	Shabbat Evening Service
Mar. 10	7:00 p.m.	Shabbat Evening Service
Mar. 17	7:00 p.m.	Shabbat Evening Service
Mar. 24	7:00 p.m.	Ruach Shabbat Service
Mar. 31	7:00 p.m.	Shabbat Evening Service

Saturdays

Mar. 4	10:30 a.m.	Shabbat Morning Service
Mar. 11	10:30 a.m.	Shabbat Morning Service
Mar. 18	10:30 a.m.	Shabbat Morning Service
Mar. 25	10:30 a.m.	Shabbat Morning Service

*In-person Shabbat services will be held in the Sanctuary. All individuals wishing to attend in-person services should be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 per CDC guidelines. Based on the updated guidelines dated August 2022 (<https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2022/p0811-Covid-guidance.html>), wearing masks is optional, but recommended for people who are considered at high risk for severe illness. Shabbat services will also be available on Zoom.



Monday, March 6

5:30 p.m. Pizza Party, Parade

6:00 p.m. Purim Service, followed by the Purimspiel, *The Purim Bride* (see p. 9)

**WRJ Women's Seder, Wednesday, March 29
(see p. 11)**

Mark your calendars!

Mitzvah Day, Sunday, April 23

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			<i>8th of Adar 5783</i>	<i>9th of Adar 5783</i> 4:00 pm Rabbi's Class: Reading Hebrew	<i>10th of Adar 5783</i> 5:00 pm Tot Shabbat 7:00 pm Shabbat Evening Service	<i>11th of Adar 5783</i> <i>Parashat Tetzaveh</i> 10:30 am Shabbat Morning Service
			1	2	3	4
<i>12th of Adar 5783</i> 9:30 am Simcha Learning Center 9:45 am Mini-Purim Carnival	<i>13th of Adar 5783</i> Erev Purim 12:30 pm Lunch and Learn 5:30 pm Pizza dinner/costume parade 6:00 pm Purim Service, followed by Purimspiel	<i>14th of Adar 5783</i> Purim 4:00 pm Simcha Learning Center	<i>15th of Adar 5783</i> 6:30 pm Riverdale Women's Celebration	<i>16th of Adar 5783</i> 4:00 pm Rabbi's Class: Reading Hebrew 7:30 pm Executive Committee Meeting	<i>17th of Adar 5783</i> 7:00 pm Shabbat Evening Service	<i>18th of Adar 5783</i> <i>Parashat Ki Tisa</i> 10:30 am Shabbat Morning Service
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
<i>19th of Adar 5783</i> 9:30 am Simcha Learning Center	<i>20th of Adar 5783</i> 12:30 pm Lunch and Learn	<i>21st of Adar 5783</i> 4:00 pm Simcha Learning Center	<i>22nd of Adar 5783</i> 7:30 pm YIVO lecture (on Zoom): Jewish Comedy (A Serious History)	<i>23rd of Adar 5783</i> 4:00 pm Rabbi's Class: Reading Hebrew 7:30 pm Board of Trustees Meeting	<i>24th of Adar 5783</i> 7:00 pm Shabbat Evening Service	<i>25th of Adar 5783</i> <i>Parashat Vayakhel-Pekudei</i> 10:30 am Shabbat Morning Service Chavurah following communal lunch
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
<i>26th of Adar 5783</i> 9:30 am Simcha Learning Center	<i>27th of Adar 5783</i> 12:30 pm Lunch and Learn	<i>28th of Adar 5783</i> 4:00 pm Simcha Learning Center	<i>29th of Adar 5783</i> 7:30 pm WRJ Book Club (via Zoom)	<i>1st of Nissan 5783</i> 4:00 pm Rabbi's Class: Reading Hebrew	<i>2nd of Nissan 5783</i> 7:00 pm Ruach Shabbat Service	<i>3rd of Nissan 5783</i> <i>Parashat Vaykira</i> 10:30 am Shabbat Morning Service
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
<i>4th of Nissan 5783</i> 9:30 am Simcha Learning Center	<i>5th of Nissan 5783</i> 12:30 pm Lunch and Learn	<i>6th of Nissan 5783</i> 4:00 pm Simcha Learning Center	<i>7th of Nissan 5783</i> 6:00 pm Women's Seder	<i>8th of Nissan 5783</i>	<i>9th of Nissan 5783</i> 7:00 pm Shabbat Evening Service	
26	27	28	29	30	31	

MARCH

Temple events and services take place in person and/or on Zoom. Check the bulletin and e-blasts for specific information and latest updates.

is an underlying zaniness to the most serious of times, and not everything makes sense.


It is absolutely absurd that Haman wants to kill an entire people just because one man didn't want to bow to him. Are the motivations of Nazis and anti-Semites any less absurd?

We Jews, who have perhaps had more than our share of tragedy, also have more than our share of humor. Mel Brooks, mentioned above, wrote *The Producers* to laugh at Nazis, because, as he instinctively knew, the one thing fascists cannot endure is mockery. We commemorate the Shoah with solemn ceremonies, but in the back of the room, people are telling Holocaust jokes. According to Viktor Frankl, the Holocaust survivor and author of *Man's Search for Meaning*, the jokes were told even in the camps, and one of the things that he credits for saving his life was that he did not lose his sense of humor.

One of my favorite Holocaust jokes is the one about the Brownshirts who surround an elderly Jewish man in Berlin in 1934 and threaten to beat him to a pulp unless he admits that everything that is wrong with Germany is the fault of the Jews. "You are right," the frightened man cries, "everything that is wrong with Germany today is because of the Jews and the bicycles!" The Brownshirts are puzzled. "Why the bicycles?" one asks. The old man shrugs. "Why the Jews?" he responds.

Maybe the reason we have lasted so long is our sense of humor. It is important. I look forward to seeing you on Purim. Let us laugh at our enemies, at danger, and, most importantly, at ourselves.

—Rabbi Thomas Gardner

 <p>TOT SHABBAT</p> <p>Bring your children to Riverdale Temple for a musical and fun-filled Tot Shabbat service with Rabbi Gardner and Cantor Finkel.</p> <p>5:00 p.m. Tot Shabbat 5:30 p.m. Pizza in the Ballroom</p> <p>RIVERDALE TEMPLE</p>	<p>Tot Shabbat Dates</p> <p>3/3/23 4/7/23 Passover 5/5/23 6/2/23</p>	 <p>RUACH SHABBAT</p> <p>Sing, Pray, Celebrate!</p> <p>Join Rabbi Gardner, Cantor Finkel, and your Riverdale Temple family in a joyful, musical Shabbat service with our full, live Ruach Shabbat Band! A light dinner follows the service.</p>	<p>Ruach Shabbat Dates</p> <p>3/24/23 4/28/23 5/12/23</p>
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THE CANTOR'S COLUMN

2 Purims, 2 Esthers

There is a moment, in a number of 1980s movies and comics, when an armed protagonist stumbles upon two look-alikes of an ally, who are fighting each other. Our armed protagonist must figure out which is real, and do away with the shapeshifter, hologram, doppelganger, illusion, or what have you, often by asking a funny or embarrassing question that only the real ally would know.

Putting ourselves in the shoes of this armed protagonist, let me ask you a question: What if they're both real, in their own way? I think this is the case with the holiday of Purim and also with its underlying narrative, the Scroll of Esther: We have two different, equally legitimate versions of the holiday and story, and on a subconscious level, we often feel we need to choose which of them we are going to let into our communities and homes. I think that it may be possible to "do both," but first, we must articulate what they are.

I think everyone is fairly familiar with "Carnival Purim": the fun Purim, in which we (and especially our youngest children) parade in costumes, play games, and share the story of brave Esther ("yay!") and wicked Haman ("boo!"). Good and evil are clearly delineated, and the story of Esther is whittled down to its essential elements so that we can celebrate freedom and bravery. I adore this Purim, and this story of Esther, and think it is invaluable to every Jewish community.

But there's another Purim, "Purim after Dark," which offers a more nuanced moral picture of the world, which leaves no worldly power unscathed by—I would argue—satire, not only in our *Purimspiel* play and games, but in the *Megillat Esther*, the Scroll

of Esther itself. When we celebrate this Purim, we are commanded to get drunk at synagogue, to parody and pretend even at the expense of the sacredness of our services, and to read the only part of the Hebrew Bible that does not mention Gd even once—in which court intrigue and potential genocide are tied up with farcical misunderstandings.

The farcical and "adult" nature of *Megillat Esther* shows up most clearly to our modern eyes in episodes that play on expectations related to the gender roles of the time it was written, in much the same way a Monty Python sketch might. In the first "act," King Ahashveros, who rules over most of the known world, whines that his wife refuses his drunken summons, sent through his own royal eunuchs. So Ahashveros asks his advisers what to do. Their answer? "If our wives hear that even the summons of the king can be ignored, then wives everywhere, even our own, could start ignoring our summonses—the whole empire would descend into chaos! She has to go!" Silly men, trying to hold onto manly power over women while emasculating themselves through displays of utter laziness, selfishness, and ignorance, in spite of and even more so *because* of their place of privilege and their wildly displayed and yet unrecognized weakness of character. (Sound topical?)

And consider Esther's final victory—when Ahashveros leaves Esther's dinner party to retrieve guards to arrest Haman, the villain prostrates himself before her, begging for his life. When the King returns, he sees this tableau and believes Haman is trying to take intimate liberties with Esther—making Haman doubly done-for and leading to his execution by impalement. There are many other moments that tend to be marked by very adult double meanings.

Recognizing the farcical elements of the text has the added bonus of relieving any discomfort we might have with the final act of the Scroll of Esther, in which the people activated by Haman, ready to murder and plunder the Jews, are instead murdered and plundered themselves, a reversal that, for me, calls to mind the chase scenes on *The Benny Hill Show* or *Scooby Doo*.

These sillier aspects of the Scroll of Esther are rendered much more substantive by the text's astute satire. The Book of Esther reminds us that people in power are often easily swayed, like Ahashveros, or corrupt, like Haman. However, if we are clever,

like Mordechai, and brave, like Esther, then it is possible to tip the scale toward justice. In the Scroll of Esther, justice and safety are assured not by Gd but by the will of people willing to put their own necks on the line to do the right and sensible thing; it is only because of the cynical and brave individuals willing to enter the hallways of power—despite the dangers and pomp and intrigue and ridiculous stuffed suits, lurking manipulators with hidden agendas, and pampered aristocrats—who are ultimately able to save the day.

Purim Sameach, a happy Purim, to you all!

—Cantor Joshua Finkel

THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

I see myself as a rather concrete and pragmatic person. I don't read poetry and rarely read novels. While I read voraciously, my choices are nonfiction books about Judaism, history, and science. I avoid engaging in conversations about abstract concepts. When Rabbi Gardner gave his class on Spinoza, I tried to pay attention to the spirited discussions dissecting Spinoza's concept of substance but, sadly, I fell short. I have taken courses, from time to time, on Jewish mysticism, not because I am interested in mysticism per se, but rather because it is such an important thread in Judaism, and it is hard to appreciate our religion without some knowledge of it. So, imagine my chagrin when I find myself most drawn to those prayers and songs that spring from our esoteric, mystical tradition.

A case in point is a class I am taking now called "The Kabbalah of Tzefat." What is most striking to me is how a sad, bedraggled group of rabbis who had been expelled from Spain and Portugal, with virtually no material possessions or comforts, managed to create a lush, ecstatic philosophy that brought passion to their lives. Why, in the mid-16th century, they gravitated toward the small hill town of Safed in the Galilee is unclear, but the village had been a center of Sufi mysticism and that might have made it seem welcoming. (Additionally, there were opportunities to earn a living and it was close to the graves of many sages.) Once there, over the course of around 60 years, they developed a secret doctrine, Kabbalah, that would, despite their best efforts to the contrary, seep into the religious practices of many Jews. Our much-loved Kabbalat Shabbat service, with its poems, *L'cha Dodi*, *Shalom Aleichem*, and *Yedid Nefish*, come from these Safed mystics. While I am no Kabbalist, I totally love their poetry, which we sing every Friday night.

None of these beautiful and hypnotic poems are overtly Kabbalistic. For example, *L'cha Dodi*, written by Shlomo Alkabetz, is simple and melodic on the surface, but relates a sacred wedding in which the *Shekhinah*, the feminine element of Adonai, who went into exile with the Jews, is welcomed back each Shabbat as a happy bride, by Gd and the congregation. Each stanza of the poem refers to one of the sefirot, or aspects of Gd, and the refrain corresponds to the highest sefirah, Keter, or crown. The Kabbalists would go out into the field on Friday, as the sun was setting, seeing that as the moment when the *Shekhinah* and the *Tiferet* (the masculine element of Gd) were joined. The practice of husband and wife having sex on Friday night is a reenactment of this on a lower plane.

One of the paradoxes of these Safed mystics was that they composed some of the most erotic poems in the context of an extremely ascetic lifestyle. While these men came from Seferad,

they saw Spanish-Jewish culture, with its emphasis on rationality and flexibility, as being responsible for the weakening of what they felt was "authentic" Judaism. So, their mysticism was coupled with an intense adherence to the minutia of observing the mitzvot. Joseph Caro said he received regular visits from a *maggid*, or spiritual mentor, who constantly warned him not to neglect the suffering of the Shekhinah and to avoid the demonic pleasures of sleep, food, drink, and marital relations. He tried to remain awake throughout the night so he could study the *Mishna* and ate and drank barely enough to keep himself alive. These extreme practices might have contributed to his hallucinatory, ecstatic visions.

While I find the asceticism and punctilious observance of the mitzvot of the Kabbalists to be at odds with my experience of Judaism, I am drawn to their attempts to leave the mundane plane and reach for the sacred. And I love their Kabbalat Shabbat poetry. Even a pragmatist can be drawn to beauty.

—Dr. Ronna Weber, President

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BULLETIN BOARD

Temple activities take place in person and/or via Zoom. For updates, please consult the calendar on p. 2, the temple website at <https://riverdaletemple.org>, and periodic e-blasts.



Go to <https://urj.org> for announcements, news and press releases, a calendar of virtual programs and events, and general information.

Copy for the next issue of *The Bulletin* is due by **March 15**. You can email it directly to administrator@riverdaletemple.org (put "Bulletin" in subject line).



Congratulations

Rabbi Stephen and Karen Franklin, on the birth of grandson **Maxwell Jordan Franklin**, son of **Ross and Nikki Franklin**

Riverdale Temple	Cantor	5	
Telephone Extensions (718-548-3800)	Simcha Learning Center	6	
Temple Office	0 or 1	Emergencies	7
Bookkeeper	2	General Information	8
Nursery School	3	Other	9
Rabbi	4		

Registry of Holocaust Survivors

If you are a Holocaust survivor or a 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, go to ushmm.org/resourcecenter.

Contact information: Holocaust Survivors and Victims Resource Center, Registry of Holocaust Survivors, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, SW, Washington, DC 20024-2126

Riverdale Temple is now part of the organics/compost pilot program in the Bronx. We can now recycle our food scraps. Please observe the different signs on the garbage receptacles and put throwaways in the proper container. We are pioneers in a wonderful program—please join the effort in caring for our environment.



Recapture the joy of reading through the JBI Library for visually impaired, blind, and reading-disabled individuals, all provided free of charge and delivered to your doorstep. Call toll free at 1-800-433-1531 or visit JBI's website at www.jbilibrary.org

Visit our website: <https://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 give 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.

Riverdale Temple Buildings and Grounds 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. Write to: administrator@riverdaletemple.org or president@riverdaletemple.org

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SIMCHA LEARNING CENTER



This past month the SLC celebrated the holiday of Tu B'Sh'vat—birthday of the trees. Some feel that the concept of taking care of the environment is a modern-day one. However, this concept has existed in Judaism practically from the

beginning, with an emphasis on the importance of trees dating back to the Talmud, close to 1,500 years ago, when a special day was devoted to the trees. Our students celebrated by starting off with a song by Cantor Finkel, "Trees are blowing in the wind... Woosh." This was followed by our students gathering together, rotating among different tables, and creating a Talmud page with their own interpretation of quotes related to Tu B'Sh'vat. The children gave their own commentary with a word, sentence, or drawing based on what they understand. The quotes included:



"It is forbidden to live in a town where there is no garden or greenery." (Jerusalem Talmud)



"The world is a tree and human beings its fruit." (Rabbi Solomon Ibn Gabirol)

"It is said that on Tu B'Sh'vat an angel taps every tree on its head and says, 'grow.'" (Midrash Rabbah)

"What you do today affects what the world will be tomorrow. Each generation is linked to the next by its actions." (Rabbi Kushner)

"One generation goes and another one comes, But the earth remains forever." (Ecclesiastes)

"Because you are 'made in the image of Gd,' you are a partner to Gd in caretaking of the earth." (Judaism and Ecology)

"Do not throw away garbage in any place that could then be scattered by the wind or spread by flooding." (Maimonides, Mishneh Torah)

—Judy Weinberg, Education and Engagement Specialist



NURSERY SCHOOL NEWS



February may be a short month, but that didn't make it any less busy at RTNS!

Our 2s classes began the month by learning all about Tu B'Sh'vat, the birthday of the trees, and why trees are so very important. Using a variety of media ranging from tissue paper and pom-poms to ice cream cones and colorful frosting, the children created their own individual trees. In January, the Lilac Room planted lima bean seeds, which they watered and kept warm, and by the dawn of Tu B'Sh'vat, the children were delighted to bring home their very own lima bean plant in full bloom! Both The Rainbow and the Pink Rooms decorated ceramic planters, which they filled with soil and parsley seeds—they should be ready to enjoy as part of their Pesach Seder celebration. In addition to Tu B'Sh'vat, the children have been learning all about Purim through music, storytelling, crafts, and puppet shows. They have been making beautiful masks and groggers, and everyone is so excited for our School Purim Celebration on March 7!

The 3K classes celebrated Black History Month, learning about the many contributions African American men and women have made, and continue to make, throughout United States history.

The Blue Room enjoyed the poetry of Maya Angelou, danced like Alvin Ailey, and played baseball like Jackie Robinson. The Red Room learned about some lesser-known African American artists and inventors, their favorite being Alfred Cralle, the inventor of the ice cream scoop! Naturally, that lesson in Black history culminated in a class Ice Cream Party!

The UPK 4s classes are knee-deep in the study of water, examining and exploring essential questions like what is ice and how does it melt? What is rain, where does it come from, and where does it go? The Green and Purple Rooms have been studying the work of artists such as Jim Dine, who embraced the heart as a template for his bold, colorful paintings that explore color, texture, and composition, and Alma Thomas, the first African American woman to hold a degree in fine arts and best known for her colorful mosaic paintings.

During the week of February 12–18, the entire school community participated in National Random Acts of Kindness Week, which culminated in Random Acts of Kindness Day on February 17. All of the classes played *Kindness Bingo*, challenging themselves to do a variety of acts of kindness, which ran the gamut from turn-taking and toy-sharing, to donating food, clothes, and toys to those less fortunate. On February 14, we celebrated Love Day in the lower lobby with a pajama party, a special breakfast, and

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story time with Sammi. We wrapped up the week with a school-wide munchkin party to celebrate a wonderful few days!

Tours for the 2023–2024 school year continue; if you have friends who are interested, please tell them to call the school at 718-796-0335 or email director@riverdaletemples.org. We have been getting many applications for next year, and we do have very limited seats available.

We are very excited about our summer camp, which runs from June 27 to August 4, 2023. Once again, this summer, there will be five groups, for 2s through 5s, with lots of hands-on projects, water play, planting, and gardening, and many more fun special events. If you or anyone you know is interested, applications are available on the RTNS website, and we have a few spots left for 2s and children entering kindergarten in the fall.

— Alexandra Abikzer, Director

SAVE THE DATE! THE RIVERDALE TEMPLE SECOND NIGHT PASSOVER SEDER WILL BE HELD ON THURSDAY, APRIL 6. WATCH FOR UPCOMING EBLAST NOTICES.

WOMEN OF REFORM JUDAISM (SISTERHOOD)



Hello Friends!

Mark your calendar! March is here! If you haven't signed up for **Mishloach Manot**, email me right away (jheyman@wrhh.net)—the deadline is fast approaching! Bags will be available for pickup after the Purimspiel (Monday, March 6).

One can also pick up bags (at Riverdale Temple) on Tuesday and Wednesday. Please reach out to me to coordinate a pickup.

WRJ is also one of the sponsors for “The Riverdale Women’s Celebration.” This event will be on Wednesday, March 8, at 6:30 p.m., in the Ballroom (see p. 11). Reservations are required. Please contact me if you haven’t made your reservations yet and would like to attend. WRJ is very excited that our very own Helen Krim is a recipient and will be “celebrated.”

We are also very excited that the **Women’s Seder** will be returning this year! This joyous event is scheduled for Wednesday, March 29—reservations are required, and if history proves itself, it will be a great evening (see p. 11 for details)!

And, since your calendar is already open, please add Saturday, June 3, for the WRJ Women’s Lay-Led Shabbat Service. Shelley Ast will be reaching out to you on how you can be involved.

Yes, WRJ is busy, but we still have much to do! **We Are Always Looking for Volunteers!** Can’t wait for you to help us at our next event!

— Joanne Heyman, President

The next meeting of the **WRJ Book Club** will be held on Zoom at 7:30 pm, Wednesday, March 22. The book to be read and discussed is *Shanda: A Memoir of Shame and Secrecy* by Letty Cottin Pogrebin. It is described by the publisher as a “frank and often amusing tabulation of well-kept family secrets.”



Mazel Tov to Helen Krim!!
We look forward to celebrating you at the
“Riverdale Women’s Celebration”!

Thank-You for Being You and Making a
Difference in Our Community!



MEN OF REFORM JUDAISM (MEN'S CLUB)

I wish all of you a Joyous Purim.

— Steve Rosenfeld, President

SOCIAL ACTION

January Accomplishments

We opened the new year to an extremely bountiful month of donations from our generous congregation, along with some help from our good friends at HIR. In all, 37 bags of food or clothing were delivered to our partners at Praxis Housing, The 4Bronx Project, and the Riverdale Neighborhood House:

- Riverdale Neighborhood House: 5 bags of toiletries, 12 bags of clothes, and 1 bag of 6 children's blankets
- The 4Bronx Project: 6 bags of clothes
- Praxis Housing: 13 bags of food

We anticipate a March discussion with Praxis leadership to talk about Mitzvah Day partnership, B'nai Mitzvot projects, birthday celebrations, and tutoring. If there are retired teachers among us, this might be a great opportunity for you to become a tutor at Praxis!

On January 22, we met with Judy Weinberg, SLC director, to introduce some of the new areas of expansion of the Social Action Committee and to solicit her advice and support. After a very productive discussion, she offered some creative ideas for our partnership with Praxis (see above) and Mitzvah Day.

Finally, we have been working closely with Lisa Bruskin on security concerns stemming from two incidents when many bags, possibly donations, were left outside the front and side temple doors without any form of announcement or planning. Sadly, we live in troubled times and cannot act as we would have in the past. Accordingly, we were compelled to safely discard these many bags and to alert the congregation against this type of practice.

March Drive—The Frances Segan Fund for Earthquake Relief

We have a 2018 letter of thanks from the Afya Foundation to Frances Segan ז"ל for providing a "generous donation." Frances was a firm believer in Afya (which means "wellness" in Swahili), and in her memory we wish to establish a special fund dedicated to providing medical, wound care, rehabilitation, and orthopedic

supplies to the tens of thousands of survivors of the Turkey-Syria earthquake who are estimated to be in need of these medical supplies. We will circulate a complete list of precisely what supplies are most needed. If you do not have these supplies on hand and wish to help, please consider a monetary donation to Afya.

Mitzvah Day Planning

Mitzvah Day is scheduled for **Sunday, April 23**, and is fast approaching! We are considering expanding this activity to both the RKA and Praxis. Our current activities are:

Toiletry Kits (toothbrushes, toothpaste, combs, razors, tissues in Ziploc bags). These will be assembled by the SLC and sent to the Midnight Run, our longtime partner that distributes these kits to the homeless. We will need to purchase the needed supplies. This can be supported in April by an update to our website that will provide a specific donation area for Social Action. We will alert the congregation when this happens.

Clothing will be sorted by older children of the SLC using latex gloves and will be distributed to our donation partners, as yet to be determined. We have discontinued our relationship with Big Brothers Big Sisters because they sell all clothing donations to downstream organizations who extract a fee for this service and then route some undetermined amount back. Our donations are now going directly to needy individuals who can use them.

Plants can be potted by younger children from the SLC and then delivered to one or more local nursing homes, such as the Hebrew Home for the Aged. Plants, soil, and pots must be purchased from a local supplier such as GrowNYC or Home Depot.

Sandwiches—cheese sandwiches will be provided to our longtime partner POTS (Part of the Solution, a Bronx organization that serves about 3 million meals a year to more than 35,000 people in danger of food insecurity).

—Jennifer and Jeff Sklar, Co-chairs

ADULT EDUCATION

The next YIVO lecture of the Yivo Jewish Culture Series will be by Professor Jeremy Dauber (see inset). You will receive emails with the Zoom link to welcome you into the talk.

According to Professor Dauber, Jewish comedy developed across the centuries and continents through the voices of many gifted people. In the long history of Jewish literature and culture, these diverse voices have included Sholem Aleichem, Franz Kafka, the Marx Brothers, Mel Brooks, Sara Silverman, and others you will recognize.

Study with Rabbi Gardner

Lunch & Learn: Mondays, 12:30–1:30 p.m.

The Book of Proverbs

continued on next page

YIVO
Yidische kultur-serye
JEWISH CULTURE SERIES 2022-2023

JEWISH COMEDY (A Serious History)

WEDNESDAY

March 15, 2023, 7:30 p.m.

Join us for a talk featuring Prof. Jeremy Dauber
Live on Zoom | Admission: Free

Jeremy Dauber is the Atran Professor of Yiddish Language, Literature and Culture at Columbia University. He is the author of a number of books on Jewish literature. His book *Jewish Comedy: A Serious History* was a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award in 2017 and was cited by *The Economist* as a "major work of scholarship that explores the funny side of some very serious business (and vice versa)." The talk examines the origins of Jewish comedy and its development from biblical times to the age of Twitter. It organizes Jewish comedy into "seven strands," e.g., the satirical, the witty, and the vulgar, and traces the ways Jewish comedy has mirrored, and sometimes even shaped, the course of Jewish history.



continued from previous page

Crash Course in Hebrew

Thursdays, 4:00–5:00 p.m. Ballroom and on Zoom (watch for the flyer in your email for the Zoom link).

Curriculum materials are available from Rabbi Gardner on request, if you want to get a taste of what and how this crash course has enabled its participants.

—Dr. Yvette Marrin, Chair, Adult Education Committee

Chavurah

The **Chavurah** will meet on **March 18**, following our Shabbat service and communal lunch to read and discuss the double portion *Vayakhel* and *Pekudei*. Both of these readings are concerned with the building of the Tent of Meeting and the preparations of Aaron and the priesthood to assume their duties. All are welcome to join in as we question, debate and learn from our Torah.

—Dr. Ronna Weber

CONTRIBUTIONS

The following funds are represented in the entries below: Bible and Prayer Book Fund, Jean P. and Francis J. Bloustein Camp Scholarship Fund, Cantor’s Special Fund, Decorating Fund, Jacob-Fogel Program Fund, Rabbi Stephen D. Franklin Music Fund, General Fund, Dorothy and Joseph Kay Prayer Book Fund, Leon and Beatrice Bereano Pulpit Flowers Fund, Rabbi’s Special Fund, Religious School and Nursery School Parents Associations Fund, Soviet Émigré Fund, Charles Tenenbaum Fund, Torah Repair Fund, Youth Activities Fund.

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Shelly Ast	For the beautiful Shabbat Shirah service		
Rabbi Stephen and Karen Franklin	Birth of Maxwell Jordan Franklin, son of Ross and Nikki Franklin		
Zachary Gerber	Riverdale Temple		

Celebrate Purim with Riverdale Temple Monday, March 6, 2023

5:30–6:00 p.m. Purim Pizza. 6:00 p.m. Costume Parade

Followed by our Purim Service and reading of the Megillah of Esther

Followed by “The Purim Bride” Purimspiel starring The Riverdale Temple Players

Followed by an oneg with hamantaschen.

This year’s spiel, “The Purim Bride,” intertwines the Purim story with the 1987 classic film “The Princess Bride” and features songs from 1987 as well. The multigenerational cast of the spiel always delivers a great deal of humor and helps to make Purim the celebration that it should be. Get ready to laugh on March 6, following the Purim service. These events are available on Zoom.



CONDOLENCES



<p>To</p> <p>Susan Stone, Tom Gavin, and Ethan and Sophie Gavin; Julie Stone, Hal Shanis, and Bodhi</p>	<p>On the Loss of</p> <p>Dr. Leon Stone, beloved husband of the late Anne Lester Stone, beloved father, father-in-law, grandfather, longtime member of Riverdale Temple</p>
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The Departed Whom We Now Remember: March Yearzeit Observances

1 Esther Amram	8 A. Donald Kronman	15 Sigmund Zwickel	24 Jacob Lerer
1 Robert Cortese	8 Maxwell L. Rothman	16 Janet Haupt	24 Marilyn (Mata) Offenbach
1 Irving Epstein	9 Morton J. Margolies	16 Irving Margel	24 Alice Oppenheimer
1 Jean Friedenberg	9 Nathan Miller	17 Rose Bernstein	24 George Perlin
1 Ida Stam	9 Morris Seferblatt	17 Alvin Fein	25 Joseph Griffel
1 Sylvia Wessler	10 Helen Eisenberg	17 James R. Geldert	25 William Heimowitz
2 Sophie Batt	10 Gussie Leibowitz	17 Naomi Gell	25 Clara Wechsler
2 Felix Carlson	11 Irwin Kaplan	17 Mollie Marsh	26 Jon Kaufmann
2 Lillian Hirshowitz	11 Hyman Lerman	17 Philip Rabinowitz	27 Carol Feinberg
2 Friedel Jacobs	11 Louis Schulman	18 Frank Goldschmidt	27 Barbara Fogel
2 Ida Yarlow	11 Al Singer	18 Sam Samuels	27 Lawrence Gardner
3 Viola Bergman	11 Julius Zuckerman	19 Walter Altman	27 Edith Gilman
3 Louis Feren	12 Ann Lipton	19 Stephan Fornino	28 Irving Adler
3 Simon Lersy	13 George W. Cohn	19 Benjamin Kaswell	28 Elsa Drucker
3 Harvey Somers	13 Beatrice Morris	19 Don Ostro	28 Mildred K. Nachbar
3 Mollie Spear	13 Melvin Stewart	19 Irving Pepper	28 Rose Posin
4 Joan Ast	14 Melvin Boaz	20 Tillie Angstreich	28 Maria Grandy Schorr
4 Joseph Cassel	14 Albert Borok	20 Benjamin Kaminer	28 Sarah Shapiro
4 Fred W. Friendly	14 Betty Dornbush	20 Roberta Katz	29 William Epstein
4 Milton Hoffman	14 Thea Griesheimer	20 Stanley Madow	29 Harriet Jaeger
4 Louis J. Monat	14 Benjamin H. Patek	20 Selma Maier	29 Sofie Shapiro
5 Fay Birnbaum	14 Nathan Yohalem	21 Rudolph E. Brill	29 Nathan Spitzer
5 Sadie Rosenthal	14 Bess R. Young	21 Daniel Gross	30 Adolf A. Abrahamson
5 Marti Roskind	14 Sonia Zayde	21 Martha Schneeweiss	30 Estelle Fried
6 George J. Harren	15 Elliott Bernstein	21 A. H. Warshaw	30 Alice Gottlieb
6 Joseph Kay	15 George Dilloff	22 Charles S. Baron	30 Louis I. Heimowitz
6 Charles Leber	15 Dr. Cyrus Gordon	22 Jeanette J. Block	30 Selma Rau
6 Marcia Meltzer	15 Jack Heftel	22 Isidore Rabinowitz	30 Lillian Tick
6 Louis D. Retman	15 Lillian Jaffe	23 Jane Chazen	31 Mildred Auerbach
6 Rose Shaifer	15 Rose Kaminer	23 Ethel Fisher	31 Ruth Krisiloff
7 Lilo Hartmann	15 Harry Marsh	23 Fannie E. Levy	31 Max Siegel
8 Stephen Gardner	15 Clara Silberman	24 Adam Baldinger	
8 Stanley Greenfield	15 Harry Tannenbaum	24 Morton Bryer	
8 Sadie Horowitz	15 Samuel Wexler	24 Mary Hollander	



Caring Committee Cares
 Reach out to Muriel Adams
 (mjadams427@gmail.com) or
 Beth Fertig Friedman (friedman.beth@yahoo.com).

**THE WOMEN OF REFORM JUDAISM
OF RIVERDALE TEMPLE**

Invite you and the most cherished women
and girls in your life to join us at our


**22nd ANNUAL
WOMEN'S SEDER**

Wednesday, March 29, 2023
6:00 p.m.

Reservations required. Please RSVP by March 24,
2023. Questions? Call Susan @ 917-509-3111.

Adults: \$54
Children under 18: \$15

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