

# The Current

“The VOICE over many waters ...” Psalm 29

MAYIM RABIM  
  
 מַיִם רַבִּים  
  
 CONGREGATION



## At Pesach: the Bitter and the Sweet

“Why’d you have to spoil everything?” This is what I hear from my daughter, when in the midst of our having a good time, I bring up some unpleasant task she needs to attend to later. Inevitably I sour the moment and, in her mind, ruin our interaction by reminding her of something coming up she’d rather ignore.

Judaism seems to have a keen understanding of this need to add an “up” moment to the bitter and a “down” moment to the sweet. When we are in the midst of mourning a loved one we recite the mourner’s kaddish. This prayer does not mention death. It exalts the Almighty. At our time of sadness, we say words that express a belief that goes counter to our inner feeling.

When we are in the midst of joyous celebration with a couple who are uniting in marriage, we break a glass. Some say it is to remember the destruction of the Temple or to be reminded that we live in a broken world. At our time of happiness, we engage in an activity to sober us for a minute. All is not whole even at a time of tremendous delight.

The Passover Seder, too, is replete with these paradoxical moments. We dip the Karpas, parsley, symbol of spring and renewal, in the salt water. Our symbol of spring is tempered by the tears we shed as slaves. We dip the maror, the bitter herb, a symbol of the bitterness of slavery, into the sweet charoset, the symbol of the mortar of the bricks the Israelites made in Egypt. Again, our memory of bitterness, exemplified through the harsh taste of the bitter herb is tempered with the sweetness of the apple mixture.

Finally, Matzah, the central symbol of Pesach, is lauded as both the bread of slavery and the bread of freedom. As slaves, the Israelites did not have time to let their bread rise. Yet as redeemed people, the matzah symbolizes our freedom. At the beginning of the seder, the matzah is referred to as the bread of a poor person, that which was eaten by our ancestors when they were slaves in Egypt. By the end of the seder, the matzah is mentioned as what was eaten when our ancestors were redeemed. A paradox.

As we celebrate Passover we acknowledge that the joy of our freedom was only possible through the pain of bitterness. There’s a way in which life is like that, where sweet moments and sad moments mingle.

Wishing you a meaningful Pesach in which the sweetness prevails!

April 2015

Rabbi Sharon Stiefel



## Ritual and Program Schedule



### **Friday April 3 through Saturday April 11**

*Passover/Pesach begins with the First Seder Friday evening April 3  
and ends at sunset on Saturday April 11*

### **Saturday April 11, 9:30 AM - noon (8th & last day of Pesach) Shabbat Morning Service**

The service will include Hallel (Psalms recited on holidays) and Yizkor.  
Services led by Rabbi Stiefel and congregants followed by Kiddush and a  
catered kosher-for-Passover lunch.

### **Thursday, April 16**

*Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Memorial Day)*

### **Sunday, April 19; 11:00 AM - 4:00 PM**

**What:** Second Annual Mayim Rabim Art Schmooze!  
**Where:** New home of Marc Lamm in S. Minneapolis  
(email [office@mayimrabim.org](mailto:office@mayimrabim.org) for the address)

**Request:** We ask Mayim Rabim members and their families to donate  
original hand-made art and/or craft items for sale. To donate, please  
contact Denise Pasmanter at [denisep66@gmail.com](mailto:denisep66@gmail.com) by **April 12th**.

This casual, drop-in fundraiser is a chance to get together, schmooze and  
nosh while browsing the artistic efforts of fellow congregants and their families.  
All proceeds go to Mayim Rabim's general fund.  
Please contribute and attend this fun event!



### **Wednesday, April 22**

*Yom HaZikaron (Israel Memorial Day)*

### **Thursday, April 23**

*Yom HaAtzmaut (Israel Independence Day)*

### **Friday April 24, 6:15 - 7:30 PM Kabbalat Shabbat Service**

Services led by Rabbi Stiefel and congregants followed  
by a dairy vegetarian potluck dinner

### **Sunday morning, April 26**

Rabbi Mordechai Liebling, Director of the Social Justice Organizing Program  
at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and former Executive Director of  
the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation, will be visiting our congregation.  
Topic, time, and place are to be determined. Watch your email for further  
details or call the office at 612-247-5490.

*All events are held at  
4401 York Avenue South  
in Minneapolis  
(Friends Meeting House)  
unless otherwise  
specified.*



## Ritual and Program Schedule



**And in May ...**

**Sunday May 3 - 3:00/3:30 - 6:30 PM  
Lag B'Omer Potluck Picnic**

**Where:** Picnic tables at Linden Hills Park (W. 43rd Street between Xerxes & Zenith Avenues) Rain location Friends Meeting House

The 33rd day of counting the Omer, between Passover and Shavuot, is traditionally marked with a day of parties, games and parades. Please join us for a potluck picnic. Members and non-members, Jews and non-Jews, and people of all ages are welcome. No RSVP necessary; just come and enjoy yourself!

**Friday May 8 - 6:15-7:30 PM  
Kabbalat Shabbat Service**

Service led by Rabbi Stiefel and congregants followed by a potluck dinner. Rabbi Debra Rappaport will give the D'var Torah on *Musar - Jewish Values and Daily Practice*. (Musar is a traditional Jewish contemplative practice that augments how we embody Jewish values more fully in our lives.)

**Thursday, May 14, 2015 - Dinner and guided tour: Jewish items at the Minneapolis Institute of Art (MIA)**

**When:** 5:30 PM - dinner; 7:00 PM - MIA tour

**Where:** Dinner - Black Sheep Pizza, 26th St. & Nicollet Ave.

**Where:** Tour - meet Susie in front of the MIA gift shop

Please come to a tour of Jewish items at the Minnesota Institute of Art (MIA), led by our own Susie McKitterick, a longtime MIA docent. She will guide us through the Jewish art locations in the museum's collection. Be prepared for some real surprises at this fascinating and enriching evening.

Admission is free. The tour is expected to take about an hour and a half.

No RSVP is necessary for the museum tour, but if you plan to meet us for pizza, please email Isaac Kaufman at [isaac\\_kaufman@yahoo.com](mailto:isaac_kaufman@yahoo.com).

**Saturday May 23 - Monday May 25**

*Shavuot commemorates receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai. It also marks the end of the seven-week counting-the-omer period which connects Pesach (freedom from slavery) to Shavuot (accepting responsibility).*

**Saturday May 23, 7:30-9:30 PM  
Tikkun Leil Shavuot**

An evening of study and refreshments led by Rabbi Stiefel and congregants.

**Saturday, May 30, 9:30-noon  
Shabbat Morning Service**

Services led by Rabbi Stiefel and congregants followed by a potluck lunch.



If you would like to make a contribution, send it to Mayim Rabim Congregation, 2751 Hennepin Ave S, Suite 236, Minneapolis, MN 55408.

You may also donate online through PayPal on our website:

[www.mayimrabim.org](http://www.mayimrabim.org)

Donations/Acknowledgements

General Fund

- Marc Lamm

Thanks / Todah Rabah

Thanks to Virginia Rovainen for her many years of service handling Accounts Payable and Payroll reporting!

Thanks to Howard Goldberg for organizing Megillah readers and to Rabbi Stiefel and Patty Diamond for a delightful Purim shpiel (play) and pizza dinner!



Refuah Sheleimah to Barbara Nordstrom-Loeb who is progressing through health challenges, moment by moment, with grace and calmness. She writes in an email that "I am glad Bruce is here to support and help... he is a sweetie as you all probably know already. Beyond that, prayers, energy, blessings are always welcome."

ALL MONTH – TOILETRIES DRIVE

The Tikkun Olam Committee is working with Jewish Family and Children's Service to collect toiletries to pass on to families in need. This drive kicked off at our Annual Meeting; collection will continue at future services. Please bring personal (hotel/ airline size) and full size unopened products and leave in the collection box at the door. Dave Kopperl will deliver them to JFCS.



## **All Month – service opportunity**

Household & Outside Maintenance for Elderly (HOME) Program seeks volunteers to mow a grateful senior citizen's lawn during the growing season. Choose your own schedule, mow every other week or so depending upon weather conditions. Work with a partner and you can take turns mowing. Family teams welcome, youth must be age 7 or older and supervised by an adult. Contact the HOME Program's volunteer coordinator at [www.scsvolunteer@seniorcommunity.org](mailto:www.scsvolunteer@seniorcommunity.org) or call 952-767-7894 for more information.

## **All month – Free Safety Check For Seniors**

The Household & Outside Maintenance for Elderly (HOME) Program of Senior Community Services is offering a no-cost Home Assessment that will evaluate the safety of senior citizens' homes. We will check out your need for handrails, grab-bars, smoke detectors, lighting, and other safety components. Elders aged 60+ residing in Minneapolis and suburban Hennepin County are eligible for this limited time offer. No sales. For more information contact 952-746-4046 or email [www.home@seniorcommunity.org](mailto:www.home@seniorcommunity.org)

## **Monday, April 13, 6:30 – 8:30 PM**

**What:** Is the Crisis Over? A conversation on banking at the intersection of *Shmita* & Economic Justice

**Where:** Shir Tikvah, 1360 W Minnehaha Parkway, Minneapolis

Seven years after the start of the economic downturn, what is the state of the financial sector for borrowers, workers, and the general economy? Join Jewish Community Action to hear from current and former bank workers and to discuss the issue in light of our sabbatical Torah texts.

## **Saturday, April 18 – Sunday, May 10**

**What:** *Jericho* by Jack Canfora, at the Minnesota Jewish Theater Company

**Where:** Highland Park Center Theater, 1978 Ford Parkway, St. Paul

**Tickets** from \$19 - \$28. Student and group discounts are available. To order, call **(651)647-4315** or visit [www.mnjewishtheatre.org](http://www.mnjewishtheatre.org)

This powerful new play looks at four thirty-something New Yorkers as they navigate the emotional aftermath of September 11. Their issues come to a head as the family gathers for a confrontational Thanksgiving meal. Displaying surprising humor and wit, this thought-provoking play about living and letting go is a moving testament to survival and redemption.



**Sunday, April 19, 1:00 – 4:00 PM**

**What:** Maimonides Society free screening of *Brave Miss World*  
**Where:** University of Minnesota's Humphrey School Conference Center,  
301 19th Ave. S., in Minneapolis.

This film tells the true story of Linor Abargil, Miss Israel 1998, who was brutally assaulted and raped in Italy while waiting to compete in the Miss World contest. She survived the assault and went on to become Miss World. Abargil's response to this terrible event was to pursue her attacker in the Italian and Israeli courts, then to become an attorney and to leverage her experience, skills and passion to advocate for rape victims throughout the world. The film will be followed by a discussion with a panel of experts in the field of sexual assault, and a resource fair where organizations can provide information about their services.

**Monday, April 20, 7:00 PM**

**What:** Minnesota Jewish Theater Company Benefit  
**Where:** Hotel Ivy, 201 South 11<sup>th</sup> Street, Minneapolis 55403  
**Tickets:** \$125.00/\$200.00 (patron)

Enjoy hors d'oeuvres, wine, dessert, performance by and conversation with Sally Wingert, mingling with theater people. Patrons are invited to a pre-event reception with Ms. Wingert. Call 651-647-4315 for information.

**Sunday, April 26, 11:00 – 3:30 PM;**

**What:** Yom HaAtzmaut/Israel Independence Day Festivities  
**Where:** St. Paul JCC

**When: 11:00 AM** – talk by Larry Rich, Emek Medical Center on medicine and the heroic efforts of Jewish and Arab physicians of Emek Hospital  
**12:30 PM** Family festivities

Enjoy food, crafts, Mini-Israel exhibit, Israeli DJ Dance Party, cooking and dancing, Krav Maga, bounce houses, photo ops, gaga pit, face painters; live performances by the Heilicher Minneapolis Jewish Day School dance troupe; Chai Notes and local musician Matt Levitt.



## **Through Thursday May 7**

**What:** *Exhibit: Jewish Refugees in Shanghai (1933-1941)*

**Where:** Sabes Jewish Community Center, St. Louis Park

**Free and open to all**

The exhibit is a collaborative community effort to share information about the unique experiences of Jewish refugees in Shanghai during World War II. The cornerstone of this project is a historical exhibit curated by the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum. The exhibit has been enhanced with additional stories from four "Shanghailanders" with deep Minnesota connections.

The full exhibit will be on display at the Sabes JCC; the stories of the four "Shanghailanders" with deep Minnesota connections will also be on display at the JCC of the Greater St. Paul Area.

*And in May ...*

## **Sunday, May 3, 8:30 AM – 1:30 PM**

**What:** "Keeping the Spirit Alive" A Conference for Caregivers and those Supporting a Loved One with Dementia

**Where:** Sabes Jewish Community Center, St. Louis Park

**Free and open to all**

Experts in the field of Alzheimer's Disease will be available to answer commonly asked questions about Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia at the Conference which is focused on caregivers and those supporting a loved one with dementia in the Jewish community. The conference is offered by the Twin Cities Jewish Community Alzheimers Task Force. To register and learn more, log-on to: [www.jfssp.org/conference](http://www.jfssp.org/conference) or call 651.698.0767.



## **Virtual Bet Midrash – Jewish Distance Learning from the Reconstructionist movement**

Virtual Bet Midrash is a series of phone calls designed to provide meaningful learning for congregational members, leadership, clergy, educators and staff. Subject matter experts will present on conference calls and impart wisdom designed to help strengthen congregations and *havurot*, foster leadership, deepen Jewish spiritual life and inspire *tikkun olam* / social justice work.

The April sessions are:

Wednesday April 1, 2:30 PM Eastern time – Shmita/Release: Reconstructing a Relevant Ritual, a lunch & learn call.

Wednesday April 15, 11:00 AM Eastern time and Thursday April 16, 1:00 PM Eastern time – Re-inventing Ritual, a study session call.

To learn about all upcoming calls visit

<http://www.jewishrecon.org/virtual-bet-midrash#Upcoming>

## **On-Line Hebrew Bible Courses**

A recommendation from a fellow congregant

I (Ron Giteck) recently enrolled in my third on-line advanced Hebrew course offered by Lehrhaus Judaica, a Berkeley, California-based Jewish studies adult school ([www.lehrhaus.org](http://www.lehrhaus.org)). Along with classmates from as far away as New Zealand, I am currently attending the second of a two-part study of "Jacob -- The Conflicted Patriarch." Beginning March 29th and going for eight sessions, Lehrhaus is offering the course, "David and Absalom." The classes are held on Sundays 8:05 - 9:30. The instructor is Dr. Jehon Grist (Ph.D. in Near Eastern Studies, U.C. Berkeley). Cost is \$110 for general public, \$85 for seniors.

### **Wednesdays April 1 – June 3 10:00 – 11:30 AM**

**What:** Melton Class: Israeli Literature as a Window to Israeli Society;  
Instructor Dr. Arie Zmora

**Where:** Sabes JCC, St. Louis Park

**Cost:** \$250.00

Dr. Zmora offers a fresh, fascinating examination of Israeli society since the birth of the State in 1948 through the pens of leading writers. This class is text based, discussion oriented and pluralistic. The material will challenge some of the Israeli myths. For more information contact Sara Lynn Newberger, Director of Hineni, at [www.sara.lynn@ttsp.org](mailto:www.sara.lynn@ttsp.org) or 651-698-8807



## Vote ARZA

Until April 30, the American Zionist Movement is holding elections to determine U.S. Jewish representation to the World Zionist Congress (WZC), the highest legislative body of the World Zionist Organization (WZO). Elections will be held in Jerusalem in October 2015.

**You must vote by April 30, 2015.** Voting costs \$10.00 (\$5.00 for those under 30).

**Register and vote** in the WZC at this pivotal juncture!

You can choose the ARZA slate, which has strong Reconstructionist participation.

Get more details on how to vote: [www.jewishrecon.org/VoteARZA](http://www.jewishrecon.org/VoteARZA)

## Tikkun Middot - Cultivating Our Character

Jewish Reconstructionist Communities are participating in a Tikkun Middot program, with the goal of introducing the Jewish practice of Musar. Learn more or sign up to receive the "Middah of the Month" at <https://www.rrc.edu/middah>.

### **This month's middah is Chesed: Lovingkindness.**

We read in the Book of Psalms (89:3): "The world is built through *chesed* (lovingkindness)." We are taught that God created the world in order to share God's goodness with all of creation. Thus, the ultimate purpose of our lives is to act with *chesed*, to do what we can to make this world a better place. Classical acts of *chesed* (*gemilut chasadim* or deeds of loving kindness) include providing meals to households with newborns, visiting the sick and the isolated, and assisting the elderly or infirm. In short, an act of *chesed* is any deed, however small, in which we use our life energy to help or give to another—even smiling and saying, "Good morning."

To act with *chesed* requires that we pay attention to the other. Before assuming that we know what they need, we ought to ask. How can I help? What do you need? Sometimes a person sitting alone would prefer to be alone. Sometimes a person would rather walk slowly than accept a ride. The highest level of *chesed* is acting in solidarity, teaches *Musar* master Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, bearing another's burden with her or him, understanding things from her or his point of view.

## Your Editor is Encouraged

***This month a highly anticipated and much appreciated submission arrived well before the March 15 deadline—information about a Hebrew bible course a fellow congregant is taking and wants us all to know about. How wonderful that this newsletter can be an outlet for everyone in the congregation. Your editor hopes for many more articles about things that might interest us all. And she's still waiting and hoping for comments about her decision to put all the information about an event in one place. This is my promise: I'll publish all the critiques, named or anonymous, and just kvell a little over the compliments, if any.***



MAYIM RABIM CONGREGATION is affiliated with the Jewish Reconstructionist movement ([www.jewishrecon.org](http://www.jewishrecon.org)). We are an urban Jewish community that comprises people of diverse ages, abilities, sexual orientations, cultural backgrounds, and financial resources. It is our mission to create and sustain spaces that enhance the practice of Judaism in the contemporary world; to that end, we are a house of prayer, of study, and tikkun olam (the repair of the world). As Reconstructionists, we view Judaism as an evolving religious civilization and claim a shared heritage with all Jews. Our synagogue is governed by an elected board of directors:

Marc Lamm, President  
Denise Pasmarter, Vice President  
Celia Gershenson, Vice President, Ritual Affairs  
Sandra Levine, Treasurer  
Helen Romanishan, Secretary  
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Committee Chairs: Isaac Kaufman, Membership; Jerri Pumroy, House; Barbara Nordstrom-Loeb, Ritual Co-Chair  
Dana Fox, Finance Co-Chair

Need information about Mayim Rabim?  
Want to know times and places of events?

Website: [www.mayimrabim.org](http://www.mayimrabim.org)

Email: [office@mayimrabim.org](mailto:office@mayimrabim.org)

Phone: 612-247-5490

Unless otherwise noted, events are held at the  
Friends Meeting House,

4401 York Ave. S, Minneapolis

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2751 Hennepin Ave. S, #236, Mpls, MN 55408



The Current is a monthly newsletter of Mayim Rabim Congregation. Submission deadline is the 15th of each month for the month following.

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