

The Current

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



Friday the 13th

I have just finished reading Ayelet Waldman’s new novel, *Love and Treasure*. While the novel explores questions regarding Hungarian art and valuables confiscated during the Holocaust, it focuses on a specific locket whose original owner is sought. The unusual locket, in the shape of a peacock, is described as unlucky because “peacock feathers bring bad luck.” Another character in the novel claims that this is superstitious nonsense.

Lucky or unlucky or nonsense? This year the months of February and March each have a Friday the 13th. As Jews we celebrate our children becoming age thirteen with a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. In our American culture, rows in airplanes often skip from row twelve to fourteen. Tall buildings omit floor thirteen. In fact the fear of the number thirteen has its own word: triskaidekaphobia.

Based on injunctions in the Torah, Jews are officially opposed to superstition. Yet we have a long history of encouraging superstitious behaviors. Grandmothers are known to follow calling their grandchildren beautiful by saying and spitting “pooh, pooh, pooh” — because the Evil Eye will not injure a child who is not praised, the “pooh, pooh, pooh” thus cancelling the earlier praise. Or saying the phrase “kayn a hora,” which is a contraction of “kayn ayin hora,” meaning without the Evil Eye. We say this when we are fortunate and want to ward off any evil eye that may get in the way of our circumstances. It is the equivalent of the expression “knock on wood.” (Which, by the way, some say is knocking on the wood Jesus was crucified on and invoking his protection.)

Did you grow up with superstitions? Do you have a good luck charm? Do you laugh about being told not to walk under ladders or were you taught to avoid them? Please join us on erev Shabbat, Friday March 13, for a discussion on Judaism and superstition. We’ll explore what the Torah states. We’ll look at some familiar customs such as breaking a glass at the end of a wedding and naming children after living or deceased relatives. We’ll also learn some magic and superstitions and have a chance to contemplate what superstition is all about. I look forward to seeing you on Friday the 13th!

March 2015

Rabbi Sharon Stiefel



Ritual and Program Schedule



Wednesday, March 4; 6:00 – 8:30 PM

What: PURIM!!

Schedule:

6:00 PM - Purim spiel (play), adults and children will act out the Purim story

6:45 PM - Pizza dinner (including gluten free option) and hamantashen;

\$8/adult; \$2/child donation requested for dinner, max \$20/family

7:30 PM - Reading of the Book of Esther (Megillah) and fun for all ages.

Sunday, March 8; 1:00 – 3:00 PM

What: Tie it up *Tikkun Olam* style!

Tie blankets for a local women's shelter.

All levels of tying skills welcome!

Where: the home of

Sydne Westorff, Minneapolis

email Sydne for directions and **RSVP** to

mayim.rabim.sydney@gmail.com by Friday, March 6th



Friday, March 13; 6:15 – 7:30 PM

Kabbalat Shabbat (welcoming the Sabbath)

Services led by Rabbi Stiefel and congregants followed by

potluck dairy vegetarian Shabbat dinner.

Rabbi Stiefel will lead a discussion on "Judaism and Superstition".

Tuesday, March 24; 7:00 – 8:30 PM

Study session with Rabbi Stiefel, *Delving into the Haggadah*

Come explore the meanings of the symbols and stories of the Haggadah, our Jewish guide for telling the Passover story at the Seder. Whether you are leading or attending a Seder, this class will shed light on the traditional text as well as offering new interpretive possibilities.

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

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Ritual and Program Schedule



Saturday March 28; 9:30 AM – Noon

Shabbat HaGadol-the Great Shabbat, the Shabbat preceding Pesach

This Shabbat, join us for breakfast (not a potluck- such a deal!!) and study, followed by a brief Shacharit service. The study session will focus on the topic of *Shmita* (sabbatical year) and will be led by Vic Rosenthal, Executive Director of Jewish Community Action.

PLEASE READ THE SHMITA DESCRIPTION AND RELEVANCE ON PAGE 13

Schedule:

9:30 AM – Continental Breakfast (bagels, fruit, and goodies) provided

10:00 AM – Study

11:00 – Service led by Rabbi Stiefel and congregants, followed by Kiddush

Note: there will not be a lunch following services.

Sunday, March 29; 4:00 pm to 5:30

Mayim Rabim Book Club meeting; full notice below

The Book: The Gift of Asher Lev by Chaim Potok

Where: home of Robin Brown, email office@mayimrabim.org for directions

And in April and May ...

*Pesach/Passover – April 3-11, Passover begins
with the First Seder Friday evening April 3*

Saturday April 11, 9:30 AM – noon

Services led by Rabbi Stiefel and congregants followed by
Kiddush and catered kosher for Passover lunch.

Sunday April 19:

Time and location TBD. Second Annual Art Schmooze

A fundraiser for Mayim Rabim and a chance to get together
to schmooze and nosh while browsing the artistic efforts of our fellow congregants

Friday April 24, 6:15 – 7:30 PM

Kabbalat Shabbat services led by Rabbi Stiefel and congregants followed
by a dairy vegetarian potluck dinner.

Sunday May 3

What: Lag B'Omer picnic, featuring games, music and delicious food

When & Where: to be announced



Donations/Acknowledgements

General Fund

- Robin King Cooper - in honor of Emi Stiefel Alperin's Bat Mitzvah

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

In memory of Larry Kivens

- Aaron Brin
- Jerome and Judith Brin Ingber
- Karen Helfand and Susan Woodstrom
- Robin King Cooper
- Deborah Tabert

Mayim Rabim Board Minutes- Thursday, February 5, 2015

Attending: Marc Lamm, Denise Pasmanter, Celia Gershenson, Sandra Levine, Sydne Westorff
 The Board approved Amy Ollendorf and Irene Michaels's new member application.
 The Board approved Debbie Fisher to be on the Election Committee.
 The Board agreed to continue Mayim Rabim's partnership with MAZON Minnesota.
 The Finance Committee reviewed the current budget and annual meeting report.
 The Ritual Committee is looking for volunteers to lead or participate in services, as well as read Torah.
 David Kopperl, of the Tikkun Olam Committee, is collecting toiletries to donate to Jewish Family and Children Service. There will be a donation box at services.
 Next Board meeting: Tuesday, March 24th

Thanks / Todah Rabah

Jerri Pumroy for her years of service as House Committee Chair.

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.



Mayim Rabim Book Club

The Book: *The Gift of Asher Lev* by Chaim Potok

When: Sunday, March 29, 2015 @ 4:00 pm to 5:30

Where: home of Robin Brown, in Minneapolis.

Contact office@mayimrabim.org for directions.

Asher Lev is a Hasid, but with a difference. He has become a painter of international stature. In the original best-selling novel, "My Name is Asher Lev," published in 1972, Potok described the precocious awakening of Lev's talent and defined the terms of what would turn out to be his lifelong battle with his father--a devout man who looked with cold fury upon his only son's growing passion for profane images.

Luckily for Lev, his father's opposition to his art was eventually overruled by the supreme spiritual leader of the community, the Rebbe--a mystical personage, equal parts Zeus and Kissinger--who was convinced that it was of the utmost importance that the boy follow the promptings of his temperament, even if they brought him within sinning distance of the sitra acha, the Other Side. The book concluded on the mixed, bittersweet note of a young man tasting his first creative success at the cost of exile from home and community.

"The Gift of Asher Lev" picks up 20 years later. In the interim, Lev has lived happily and, it is assumed, productively in France. The plot-thickening additive of the novel arrives with the death of his beloved Uncle Yitzchok, a Brooklyn, N.Y., Hasid. Yitzchok, a jovial family man, was alone in encouraging the fledgling artists. Full of trepidation at what he is going back to encounter, Lev returns to America with his family, to attend the funeral. For those who have read the first novel, the life into which he plunges is familiar in its warmth, its tensely pitched emotion, its prayerful silences.

The cast of characters has remained pretty much the same: the stern old-world father, now, whose life is defined by his religious rituals and globe-trotting service for the Hasidic community (he works as a kind of roving ambassador for the Rebbe); the gentle, put-upon mother, the warm gaggle of aunts and uncles and cousins. Hope you can join us for our 13th book discussion.



How Congregations Survive

Mayim Rabim, like every faith congregation under God's blue sky, survives on the efforts of volunteers. Some volunteers are members of the Board of Directors and steer policy for the congregation. Others chair committees. Still others, the unsung heroes and heroines, serve on committees, even put out chairs and fold them up again. Some support a one-time activity such as the recent talent show/silent auction. Some do committee work all year.

This coming year we need to fill many positions (see below). These committees need members to work year-round to keep our congregation going. There is a niche for everyone whether it's something you can do from home or something that necessitates driving. We are asking everyone who is able, to respond to our call for volunteers. Your life and the congregation will be richer as a result.

Volunteer activities in **Bold Print** are higher priority needs. Please reply to announcements@mayimrabim.org with a selection of volunteer jobs you would be willing to do. Send us your questions as well. Todah Rabah/Thank you very much!

Your congregations needs

The **Board of Directors** makes policy, manages finances, and oversees synagogue operations and programs. Directors are elected for 2-year terms. The Board meets once a month; meetings begin with a pot luck and some shmoozing. The tone of the meetings is relaxed; people are considerate; we never allow meetings to go over two hours.

I would like to run for:

_____ **Vice President** _____ **Ritual Chair/Vice President**
_____ **Member at Large**

The **Adult Programs Committee** plans and implements programs for the congregation including Jewish educational classes, lectures, cultural arts, and community building events. Within some guidelines, you can set the programs.

_____ **Adult Programs Committee chair**
_____ **Serve on committee**

The **Ritual Committee** coordinates and helps plan services and ritual events.

_____ **Service leaders (mentors are available)**
_____ **Torah readers (mentors are available)**

The **House Committee** manages (but not necessarily does) setup and cleanup, shopping, and scheduling the Meeting House.

_____ **House Committee Chair**

_____ Serve on committee

The **Finance Committee** helps prepare the annual budget and tracks our financial activity.

_____ Coordinator for Fundraiser Event

_____ Serve on committee

The **Membership Committee** is responsible for planning and coordinating activities related to attracting new members and maintaining a caring community.

_____ Serve on committee

The **Youth Programs Committee** plans children's programming during Shabbat services and holidays, arranges for baby sitters during services, helps plan family services periodically, and other child friendly events.

_____ Serve on committee

The **Tikkun Olam Committee** coordinates programs dedicated to repair and care of the world, within the congregation and greater community.

_____ Serve on committee

My Volunteer Experience — Isaac Kaufman

When I think about the importance of volunteering at Mayim Rabim, the story I keep coming back to is from about five years ago, when I was serving on our board of directors. The decorative handles on our Torah scroll were cracking and on the verge of falling apart, and the board had a series of discussions about how to fix them without risking damaging the scroll itself.

Eventually our resident woodworker extraordinaire, Marc Lamm, offered to design and carve some new wooden handles for the scrolls. He and I drove to the Friends Meeting House, where I was tasked with holding the scroll in place while Marc expertly drilled down into the posts and affixed the beautiful handcrafted handles. I remember thinking that I never imagined having such a tangible experience with the Torah! It was a very memorable day.

These are the kinds of opportunities that are unique to a small, member-driven congregation such as Mayim Rabim. Whether it's leading a service, teaching a class, or serving on a committee, Mayim Rabim offers ways to participate directly in building and sustaining our community that rarely come along in larger and more traditional congregations.

Just as important, because our paid staff is so small, Mayim Rabim depends on these kinds of volunteer efforts to survive. One of our guiding principles is that everyone should have a stake in the life of the congregation, which includes contributing whatever time, energy and skills you are able.

So please remember to volunteer early and often!



Twin Cities Jewish Book Series March 1 – 4:00 pm

Transcontinental Express: New Jewish American Fiction

Boris Fishman, *A Replacement Life*
and
Marina Rubin, *Stealing Cherries*

Location: [Moscow on the Hill](#), 371 Selby Ave., St. Paul

The tidal wave of Jewish émigrés from the former Soviet Union has brought us a new group of writers who use their adopted tongue to make sense of American immigrant realities. In co-sponsorship with the Twin Cities Jewish Book Festival, *Rimon** presents two of these rising writers. Joining them in the discussion will be a contributing writer from the **Jewish Daily Forward**. Tickets: \$12, call 651-698-0751

* in partnership with [Rimon Salon Series](#), an initiative of the Minneapolis Jewish Federation, Genesis Philanthropy Group and Russian American Jews of Minnesota.

March 10, 2015 – 7:30 PM

Anya Von Bremzen, *Mastering the Art of Soviet Cooking: A Memoir of Food and Longing*

Where: St. Paul JCC

Anya von Bremzen is one of the most accomplished food writers of her generation, the winner of three James Beard awards and the author of five acclaimed cookbooks. In her latest book, *Mastering the Art of Soviet Cooking: a Memoir of Food and Longing* she recounts three Soviet-Jewish generations and their complex relationship with totalitarian power, Jewish identity and food.

Presented in partnership with the [Museum of Russian Art](#), Genesis Philanthropy Group and Russian American Jews of Minnesota.

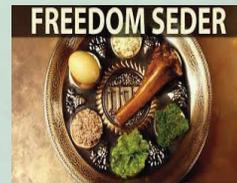
Tickets: \$25 (includes a copy of book), call 651-698-0751



Sunday, March 15,

doors open 1:30 PM; seder begins at 2:00 PM

Jewish Community Action's Annual Immigrant Freedom Seder



Where: Adath Jeshurun Congregation; 10500 Hillside Lane West, Minnetonka

This year's seder will weave together stories that highlight struggles and triumphs in social justice and draw from our history, uniting our past with current stories about immigrant rights, voting rights, gun violence prevention, and economic justice. A sampling of traditional seder foods will be served.

Admission: \$10–18 sliding scale, no one will be turned away for lack of funds. Childcare is available.

RSVP to reserve your space by Monday, March 9th to Lauren at (651) 632-2184 or lauren@jewishcommunityaction.org.

Sunday, March 15; 12:30 - 5:00 PM

What: Healthy Youth-Healthy Communities Conference

Where: Mount Zion Temple, 1300 Summit Ave, St. Paul

Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis (JFCS) will host the 8th Annual Healthy Youth-Healthy Communities Conference. Mayim Rabim is one of many local co-sponsoring organizations.



The conference is **free and open** to anyone interested in raising healthy youth, including parents, educators, clergy, youth workers, and professionals. It will feature sessions led by experts on the social and emotional wellness of adolescents, as well as resources for families and professionals.

The keynote speaker will be Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, Ph.D., Vice President of Research and Development at the Search Institute. He will present "The Power of Relationships for Kids' Success: Beyond the Cliché."

Registration for the Healthy Youth-Healthy Communities Conference is open. Contact Danielle Livon-Bemel, Community Youth Specialist, at 952-542-4865 or dlivonbemel@jfcsmpls.org.



And in the Summer ...



July 15-19, 2015

What: Hevreh, a study retreat

Where: The retreat center at Capital Camps, in Waynesboro, PA.

HEVREH is an opportunity

- to study with master teachers of Judaica
- to reflect and rejuvenate
- to pray, sing and dance
- to reconnect with friends and make new ones
- to encounter nature
- to celebrate Shabbat.
- to be a part of an Adult Jewish Learning Community!

Hevreh is sponsored by **TriBraining Inc.**, a not-for-profit educational foundation, in cooperation with the Jewish Reconstructionist Communities/Reconstructionist Rabbinical College.

Staying in the new retreat center, participants will have access to the camp's facilities, including an enormous pool, small lake, tennis courts, ropes course, etc.

There will be opportunities for intensive study with RRC faculty members Rabbi Jacob Staub, Ph.D., Elsie Stern, Ph.D., and Rabbi David Teutsch, Ph.D., and other Jewish scholars and artists.

Watch this space for further details.

Virtual Bet Midrash - Jewish Distance Learning from the Reconstructionist movement

Virtual Bet Midrash is a series of 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 program features calls in the following formats:

- **Rabbinic Lunch & Learn Calls** (30 minutes sessions) - Listen to interesting teachings on your lunch break!
- **RRC Study Sessions** (one hour sessions) - Each topic will be offered twice. - Participants will have a chance to study a common text, then discuss it in small groups.
- **Special Rabbinic Leadership Topic call** (a one-time one hour session)
Rabbi Shawn Zevit will present strategies for dealing with tragic losses within your congregation.

Calls will be recorded and posted online within one week of each call.

The March calls are:

Reconstructionism on an Island: Being the Only Reconstructionist Voice in Town

Thursday, March 5, 12:30 PM Eastern time

Presenter: Rabbi Alex Lazarus-Klein

New prayers in contemporary Israel

This call is offered twice:

Tuesday, March 10, 1:00 PM Eastern time

AND

Thursday, March 12, 11:00 AM Eastern time

Presenter: Adina Newberg

Theory, Practice, and Accessing Our Potential (Mussar)

Tuesday, March 17, 2:30 PM Eastern time

Presenter: Rabbi Daria Jacobs-Velde

A Tikkun Olam call (title TBD)

This call is offered twice

Tuesday, March 24, 2 PM Eastern time

AND

Thursday, March 26, 1 PM Eastern time

Presenter: Rabbi Mordechai Liebling

Rabbis' Continuing Ed: Community Resilience in the Face of Tragedy

Wednesday, March 25, 1 PM Eastern time

Presenters: Rabbi Shawn Zevit and David Piver, President of Mishkan Shalom

Register for a call by going to <http://www.jewishrecon.org/virtual-bet-midrash> and choosing a call. You will find a 'Register' button on the page with the detailed description of the call.

Also, view the schedule for the entire year at <http://www.jewishrecon.org/virtual-bet-midrash>

Proposed Change to the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College's (RRC) Partner Status Policy

RRC has a long-standing policy stating that "The RRC does not ordinarily admit or graduate as a rabbi a student married to, or in a committed relationship with, a non-Jew." Over the past few years, the RRC faculty has engaged in a Values Based Decision Making process regarding this policy and is now considering a proposal to eliminate it.

The faculty is solely responsible for admissions and graduation requirements decisions. The faculty knows that this particular admissions and graduation policy raises issues that many of RRC's stakeholders feel strongly about. The faculty also knows that its decision regarding this issue will have implications for Reconstructionist congregations and the movement as a whole. For these reasons, the faculty is reaching out to all of RRC's stakeholders — students, alumni, board members, and members of Reconstructionist congregations — for feedback on the proposed change. This feedback will figure prominently in the faculty's next round of deliberations.

So far, the faculty has gathered feedback from the RRC board, current RRC students, the members of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association, and the Plenum of Reconstructionist Congregations. They are now seeking feedback from members of Reconstructionist congregations regarding these questions.

1. What consequences (positive and/or negative) are likely or possible if RRC eliminates the prohibition?
2. What consequences (positive and/or negative) are likely or possible if RRC maintains the prohibition?
3. Are there important values that a policy change would/would not honor?
4. How would eliminating or amending the policy affect your feelings about Reconstructionist Judaism or your feelings about identifying as a Reconstructionist Jew?
5. Can you imagine your community hiring a rabbi who is married to or partnered with a non-Jew? Can you articulate why or why not?

This document describes the proposed change and the key factors that arose in the faculty's deliberations so far.

<http://www.jewishrecon.org/files/PDFs/4.%20Partner%20Status%20Policy%20Overview.pdf>

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This document covers some Frequently Asked Questions.

<http://www.jewishrecon.org/files/PDFs/post-plenum%20FAQs.pdf>

This document includes four rabbinical perspectives regarding eliminating or maintaining the prohibition.

<http://www.jewishrecon.org/files/PDFs/Rabbinic%20Perspectives%20on%20PSP.pdf>

The faculty is looking for qualitative information, not quantitative data. They want to understand what people in affiliated congregations think about this complex topic. If you have comments or opinions you would like to share with RRC, please email them to office@mayimrabim.org by Friday March 27. We will pass them along.

Reconstructing Shmita-

What is it and what does it mean for us today?

On Rosh Hashanah, in addition to marking the beginning of 5775 we entered the 7th year in the seven-year agricultural *Shmita* cycle. Just as Shabbat, the seventh day of the week was a time of rest and rejuvenating, *Shmita*, considered to be a release or sabbatical year, was a time of debt relief and of a year-long Shabbat for workers and the land.

For many of us today, *Shmita* might seem an ancient custom with little relevance to contemporary life. How might *Shmita* principles inspire action in today's challenging times? How might *Shmita* principles inform our collective actions and individual choices? What lessons can we learn and apply from the tradition of *Shmita*? Are there ways that *kavanah* (intention) of *Shmita* is even more relevant for us today, when whole parts of our society struggle with underwater homes, workers have no days off even for illness, and rising costs for housing, result in unprecedented wealth gaps, overwhelming student debt, and high costs of caring for aging parents.

On March 28th, Vic Rosenthal, Executive Director of Jewish Community Action (JCA) will be leading a Shabbat Study Session to further explore these questions. Join us from 9:30 – noon for breakfast (food provided) and study followed by a short Shacharit service. For further questions contact Barbara 612-925-5277 (loebx001@umn.edu)

The Best Laid Plans

Editors have a way of editing. Newbies have a way of making changes, maybe just so that people would know there's a new sheriff in town. I had hoped that my first change, putting all the information about an event in one place so no one would have to flip pages, would take hold. But the best laid schemes o' mice an' editors/gang aft a-gley [with a tip o' the tam to Robert Burns]. This month you'll find that brief items in the Mayim Rabin program and the community programs enjoy expanded coverage elsewhere in the newsletter.

However, I plan to be especially consistent about my second issue, which isn't a change at all but an ongoing policy that I particularly support since I'm new to our congregation. Whenever you are invited to Martin's mansion, Sam's studio, Alice's abode, or Hugo's hutch some indication of how to find their addresses will be included. Most of you have known each other for decades and know exactly where Hugo's hutch is but, in order to be a welcoming congregation, we need to tell the newbie's how to find someone's address. Notice that in this issue you are referred to the Mayim Rabim office for address information. That way your privacy is protected but you can still get to book club or a blanket making party.



MAYIM RABIM CONGREGATION is affiliated with the Jewish Reconstructionist movement (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
Sydne Westorff, Chair, Tikkun Olam
Larry Gravitz, Member At-Large
Jeremy Fisher, President Emeritus
Sharon Stiefel, Rabbi
Dana Fox, Congregational Administrator
Committee Chairs: Isaac Kaufman, Membership; Jerri Pumroy, House; Barbara Nordstrom-Loeb, Ritual Co-Chair
Dana Fox, Finance Co-Chair

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

Website: www.mayimrabin.org

Email: office@mayimrabin.org

Phone: 612-247-5490

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

4401 York Ave. S, Minneapolis

Mailing Address:

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



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

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