



THE MEANING OF CLEANING

The tradition of cleaning for Passover is an ancient one. We are commanded by the Torah to remove all the leaven from our dwelling places, and to not eat it for the duration of the holiday, which this year is from the evening of April 8th and ends the evening of April 16th. The weeks leading up to Passover are often a period of intense cleaning, and then cooking for the holiday, as we “turn over” our kitchens to our special utensils, plates, and foods dedicated to this unique, joyous, and central holiday to our people.

When we clean our homes with spring in mind, we are (finally) shedding the build up of winter, and all that comes along with it. The snow boots get stored, the dust and residue left over from snow is swept away, and we can happily put our winter sweaters and clothing in the closet until next year. We pull out our spring wardrobes, and prepare for the joyous days of warmth ahead.

Although it is a good time for the traditional “spring cleaning,” our tradition suggests a different approach to understanding what it is we are meant to be “cleaning” at this point in the season.

The Torah commands a total removal of leaven, called chametz. Chametz is food that is made of any of the five specific grains (wheat, barley, oats, spelt, and rye) that have come in contact with water for at least 18 minutes before the baking process can be completed. In other words, unless it is matzah (which is, by definition, finished baking within 18 minutes), anything made with any of these five grains is prohibited to be eaten on Passover. We not only remove it, we search for it (in case it fell behind the refrigerator, is hiding in a cupboard, or even if forgotten in a glove compartment), burn it on the eve of Passover, and ultimately sell (you can sign our contract of sale here at Habonim and I will sell your chametz for you) whatever cannot be thrown or given away (including items that would be considered a great financial loss, such as your single-malt scotch collection, etc.) In addition, we have the tradition of neutralizing our kitchen utensils so that they may be used on Passover, as they are assumed to have chametz cooked into them. This is generally done through heat: in a sense, burning the chametz out of our utensils, and boiling it away. This is what we call making our homes kosher for Passover.

Spiritually speaking, the physicality of cleaning for Passover

is a great reflection of the inner work we can and ought to be doing for the sake of celebrating our liberation from slavery. As our Hassidic tradition teaches us, “Egypt” is a symbol of physicality and a more base animalistic way of being in the world. Therefore, liberation from this “Egypt” means our being able to ascend toward a more elevated form of existence, meaning having the ability to live a “higher,” more ethical, and spiritual form of life. The food that we eat, symbolized by the matzah, is a food that is humble, basic, and has not risen—meaning it has not had time to rise and get puffy. This “puffiness” is a classical symbol of ego, arrogance, and the more self-centered of our impulses. Chametz is an impediment to living a more spiritually connected life. “Pharaoh” symbolized one who was consumed with these base attributes, which was why he could not let the Israelites go. We are therefore commanded to burn it out of our homes, and to eat matzah as a symbolic antidote to those energies which had a grip on us while in Egypt.

Cleaning our kitchens and our homes and removing all “leaven,” is how we, as Jews, practice trying to get ourselves back on track toward living more responsible, ethical, and connected lives. We burn it out of our physical world (kitchen), and eat matzah as a way of cleansing our inner world, both physically and spiritually. With every scour, sweep, and ultimately with every bite of matzah, we transform our homes, our bodies, and our souls for the sake of being liberated from the energies that would distract us from fulfilling our purpose as Jews: to being a force that helps make the world a better place.

As you clear away the dust and residue from your home and self this year, keep in mind the direction you would like to be headed in from now forward. What might you be able to dedicate (or rededicate) yourself to this next half of the year? Have you found a way to offer your expertise to someone who might need it? Have you found a way to volunteer your time or other resources for the benefit of others? Are you living the kind of life that is worthy of your time and efforts?

May we all enjoy the peace that comes after the hard work of cleaning is done, and may we be blessed to share it together as a holy community. Chag Kasher v'Sameach, may you all have a happy, cleansing, and “kosher” holiday!

— Rabbi Joshua Katzan

CONGREGATION HABONIM

44 West 66th Street
New York, NY 10023
(Between Columbus Ave. & Central Park West)
Phone: 212/787-5347 Fax: 212/595-3542
Email: office@habonim.net
http://www.habonim.net

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Cantor Bruce Halev
Yolanda Potasinski Executive Director
Rabbi Laurie Phillips Education Director
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Congregation Habonim
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HABONIM SPOTLIGHT:

HABONIM TEENS VOLUNTEER AT LINCOLN

SQUARE NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

Approaching the Lincoln Square Neighborhood Center, one can hear a group of Habonim teens going back and forth about which classroom they want to volunteer in today. "You were in the 3 year old room last week, can I please go there today. I have not seen Jonah in 2 weeks." Eventually with the dispute settled, the teens head to their respective classrooms. As the door cracks open, a barrage of 3 year olds come running with outstretched arms to greet their weekly visitors.

This is a common scene for four Habonim teens as they begin their volunteer experience at the Lincoln Square Neighborhood Center. Every Tuesday afternoon Sara Shuster, Annie Block, Jackie Block, and Sam Bloomberg donate two hours of their free time to better the community. The Lincoln Square Neighborhood Center is a facility that provides subsidized childcare for families in need that live in the Lincoln Square area. The teens assist the center's classroom teachers and help with students ranging from 2-6 years old.

"I personally chose to volunteer because I want to give back, and I think it's especially important to help young children." Sara Shuster said. "My most meaningful moment would be when I was about to leave and a little boy called me back and asked for a hug."

Through their experiences the teens are learning valuable life lessons. For example, Annie Block now has a better understanding of the responsibilities and challenges that exist when working with young children.

"There was a day when one of the kids knocked over the water pitcher. Then all of the kids started touching it and walking in it. It was hard to clean up since they all wanted to play in the water."

Despite having to spend time cleaning up messes or breaking up fights over toys, the teens have gained from the personal connection that they make with the children.

"I really like when the kids sit on my lap or ask me to do something with them," Jackie Block said. "I like helping the community and the kids are really sweet."

When asked to sum up the volunteer experience, Sam Bloom put it best: "It's fun, but it takes your full attention!"

In addition to volunteering their time, this group of Habonim teens has decided to try and support the community center in other ways. They hosted a bake sale at Purim time, in which all of the proceeds were donated to the organization. As well, many of the participants personally cleaned out their rooms and donated their used toys to the community center. If you would like to support this group in raising funds for the Lincoln Square Neighborhood Center or by donating used toys, please contact Laurie Mendik at lauriemendik@yahoo.com.

Peace,

— Jamie Skog, teen advisor

Be our next Habonim Spotlight! Please email Glenna Lee, glee1017@gmail.com to share your story with us!

QUEENS COMMUNITY 2009

Shabbat Services

April 3

May 1

June 5

Adult Learning

May 13

June 10

YOM HASHOAH READING OF THE NAMES

Monday, April 20th, 10pm – Tuesday, April 21st, 6pm
at Congregation Shaare Zedek, 212 West 93rd Street (between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue)
April 20th, 10pm until April, 21st 8:30am and continuing at the JCC* until April 21 9:30am – 6pm
*in Manhattan, 334 Amsterdam Avenue @ 76th Street, 7th floor beit midrash

Congregation Habonim will be reading the names from 4am-4:30am. We encourage you to volunteer to read the names to keep the memory of our ancestors alive. For more information or to volunteer your time, please call April Reubenstone at 212-787-5347 ext. 13.

THE READING OF THE NAMES

Neil Goldstein

For the last several years, I have attended the “reading of the names” conducted by New York area synagogues on Yom HaShoah Day. While no member of my immediate family was a victim of the Holocaust, as a Jew, and as a human being, it has been a part of my life. I remember hearing stories of the six million Jewish men, women and children lost to Nazi atrocities without even comprehending the enormity of six million of anything, let alone people. When some years ago I visited Yad Vashem, I found myself moved by the many images that conveyed the depth and extent of loss, yet, nothing conveyed that loss more eloquently and more poignantly than the reading of the names.

The reading of names is conducted in a setting that conveys an air of both spirituality and respect – respect for the dead. It is typically done in a darkened room lit with candles and a reading light. Names are carefully printed in a very thick book. Each reader takes great care with the enunciation of each name.

The book from which the names are read, despite being very thick, is one of many, many such books, each organized by country and alphabetically within the country, listing the names of each of the victims, their date of birth, if known, and the town, village or city in which they lived before having their lives so violently uprooted and ended. The names are listed in columns, several columns to a page, in relatively small type. As you read the names, one cannot help but be overwhelmed by the sense that every name read represented a living, breathing, human being with hopes and fears, joys and sadnesses, family and potential, and each one represented a life prematurely ended.

Yet, for that one brief moment, as each name is read aloud, those individuals live again if only in the memory and awareness of the reader and those present. And they are remembered, lest we forget. At the time, they are not, as each name is read, the collective “Six Million”, rather, they are numerous individual people and in their individualness and numbers, it makes the moment – and the loss – more meaningful. Please join us in keeping a memory of each of the six million alive by speaking their names aloud, and by remembering.

Barbara & Larry Jacobsberg

It is cold when we leave for
The “Reading of the Names.”
The streets are desolate;
Our neighbors asleep.
We imagine the Jews of Vienna
Belongings stuffed into a single valise
Herded toward the Judenplatz.

We arrive.
The synagogue appears deserted.
We try several doors to
Find the one left unlocked.

The sanctuary is dark
Save the Ner Tamid
A reading light at the lectern
Six flickering yahrzeit candles.

The small audience attends.
Each reader recites names
Jews,
Unable to find sanctuary
Only sixty-five or seventy years ago.
A surname repeated
Again and again and again.
A grotesque rhythm.
The age of a murdered child read aloud.

Souls reach up from the pages.
We are here for them.
We are their Kaddish.

SAVE THE DATE - SISTERHOOD SHABBAT

SHABBAT MORNING MAY 9TH

Please join us on May 9th to welcome Rabbi Shlomo and Bernice Balter back to Congregation Habonim. Rabbi Balter led Habonim during a transitional period prior to the arrival of Rabbi Samuels.

Our Sisterhood congregants will lead the Shabbat service, Bernice Balter will give the D'var Torah and following Kiddush lunch, Rabbi Balter will lead the Beit Midrash.

PROGRAM AT THE JCC

The following films will be shown during the evening on Monday, April 20th and Tuesday, April 21st at the JCC:

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY: SAVIORS ON THE SCREEN 2009

The JCC honors Yom HaShoah with a special marathon of films remembering the righteous saviors of Jews during the Holocaust. Co-sponsored by the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation and The Simon Wiesenthal Center.

Blessed is the Match

Directed by Roberta Grossman (90 min, USA, 2008)

Narrated by three-time Academy Award nominee Joan Allen, *Blessed Is the Match* is the first documentary feature about Hannah Senesh, the World War II-era poet and diarist who became a paratrooper, resistance fighter and modern-day Joan of Arc. This powerful story unfolds through the writings and photographs of Hannah and Catherine Senesh.

Mon, Apr 20 7:30 PM - 9:00 PM \$8 Member/\$10 Non-Member EFFSOS01W9

Pigeon: Avoda Arts Educators' Event

Directed by Anthony Green (11 min, USA, 2005)

Set in Remies, France, in 1941, and based on a true story, *Pigeon* recounts a rare and startling act of resistance. This award-winning short film will be presented by Avoda Arts as part of their Reel Learning series, with a special presentation of their educational resources that come with this exceptional film.

Tue, Apr 21 6:30 PM - 7:30 PM Free All EFFSOS02W9

Just an Ordinary Jew : An Oxymoron in Contemporary Germany

Directed by Oliver Hirschbiegel (88 min, Germany, 2005)

In a dazzling tour de force, Ben Becker, a German film and theatre actor, portrays Emanuel Goldfarb, a journalist deeply conflicted over whether to accept an invitation to speak to students about being a Jew in contemporary society. This extraordinary monologue, directed by Oliver Hirschbiegel (*The Downfall*) and based on a book by Swiss author Charles Lewinsky, explores the complexity of life as a Jew in post-war Germany. A post-screening conversation will follow led by scholar Jeffrey Peck, dean of The Weissman School of Arts and Sciences at Baruch College and author of *Being Jewish in the New Germany* (Rutgers University Press, 2006). German with English subtitles. Co-sponsored by the Consulate General of Germany in New York.

Tue, Apr 21 7:30 PM - 10:30 PM \$8 Member/\$10 Non-Member EFFSOS03W9

For more information, please contact Steffi Pfalz, 646-505-4458 or spfalz@jccmanhattan.org

THE HABONIM SHABBAT BEIT MIDRASH

TOPICS FOR APRIL 2009

Please join us for the Shabbat Beit Midrash, in the Sanctuary following Shabbat morning services and kiddush lunch. Each week, Rabbi Katzan, Cantor Halev, guest rabbis, or members of the Habonim community teach on a wide range of topics, followed by lively discussion.

April 4 - NO BEIT MIDRASH SCHEDULED

April 11 - Ariel Simon

"The End of Days According to the Dead Sea Scrolls"

April 18 - Cantor Bruce Halev

"Jewish Superstition and Magic"

April 25 - Rabbi Joshua Katzan,

"Jewish Values of the Afterlife"

ROSH CHODESH WITH RABBI LAURIE PHILLIPS

(Wednesday, April 22 (Iyar), at 7:00pm)

Join the women of Congregation Habonim for conversation, dinner and learning as we celebrate the new month of Nisan. Rabbi Laurie Phillips, Habonim's Education Director, will lead the discussion. If you are interested in joining or want additional information please contact co-chairs:

Ellie Schaffer (elschaffer@gmail.com)

or Elizabeth Bernhardt (bernhare@yahoo.com).

Additional meeting dates: May 27 (Sivan), June 23 (Tammuz). All meetings begin at 7:00pm. Locations vary -- check your email for the location.

THANK YOU FROM SISTERHOOD

Sisterhood would like to thank the small army of people who helped out on the Mishloach Manot project.

You were a fabulous team and we deeply appreciate your assistance with this project.

We hope that you enjoyed working on this project enough to help out again next year!

TEACH YOUR CHILDREN WELL

A new arrival to the Habonim Bulletin is: Teach Your Children Well, a feature that will offer parents ideas on how to infuse Judaism into your children's lives.

Mornings with Modeh Ani

Mo-deh ah-nee li-fa-necha Melech chai vi-kayam she-he-che-zarta bee nish-mah-tee bi-chem-lah ra-bah emu-nah-te-cha.

[I offer thanks to You, living and eternal King, for You have mercifully restored my soul within me; Your faithfulness is great.]

Since our daughter was first born, we have sung Modeh (or Modah, for females) Ani for her and now with her. Modeh Ani is the prayer one sings upon waking up, thanking God for enabling you to begin a new day. It's the perfect prayer for a tired parent who wishes she could sleep later – as it reminds us to rejoice in our new day and to begin our day in a Jewish way! Our daughter loves this prayer, sung with a festive melody, and has learned to sing the first line on her own. Singing Modeh Ani in the morning is a simple reminder that God is in our lives and within our relationships. As we care for our children, we are fostering sacred bonds.

Tot Shabbat on Saturday mornings provides a festive “cow-boy” themed tune. Our favorite melody can be found in the “OY BABY 2” DVD.

For more on Modeh Ani, please see:
<http://www.askmoses.com/en/article/286,2252143/What-is-Modeh-Ani.html>

Do you have a meaningful custom in your family that you'd like to share with the community? If so, please email Glenna Lee, glee1017@gmail.com with your suggestion!

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MAZEL TOV

Anne Rossmann and Robert Weisz on their Aufruf.

Lori, Robert and Lucy Rubin on the birth of their new son and brother born on Friday, March 20th.

Bill, Lois Samuel and Hannah Taubenfeld
on Samuel becoming Bar Mitzvah.

CONDOLENCES

Congregation Habonim extends its heartfelt condolences to:

Dail Stolow and Norbert Fruehauf on the death of Dail's beloved mother, Sarah Stolow.

Habonim's President, Saul Sanders, his wife Mary and their children Rebecca, Beth and Chaim on the loss of Saul's father Leon Sanders.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE NEWS

Nominating Committee Prepares for Annual Meeting
Election of Trustees Annual Meeting this year is May 12, 2009 at 7:30pm.

The Nominating Committee for Trustees requests that Congregation members suggest names of persons who they believe would be desirable additions to the Board.

Overall responsibility for management and administration of the affairs of the Congregation resides with the Board of Trustees, which serves as a representative governing body for the entire membership. The Board, which usually meets monthly (except in the summer), works to identify and define the needs of the Congregation and to transform them into realistic programs, actions and goals. It is responsible, among other things, for initiating new programs, planning for the future, and identifying and cultivating new leadership.

Board members individually are expected to exhibit a personal commitment to Congregation Habonim by participating in synagogue life by attending religious services, participating on committees and in communal projects, supporting and attending educational, fund-raising and social programs, and actively welcoming and drawing in new members. Board members are also expected to exhibit a personal commitment to Jewish learning, Jewish observance, and support for the larger Jewish community and Israel, and to enhance the spiritual and ethical wellbeing of Congregation Habonim.

For trustee nominations, please contact Laura Meislin -- laurameislin@yahoo.com

MISHLOACH MANOT

During the week of March 2nd, Religious School participants learned about the value of giving *Mishloach Manot* to others. They made their own *Mishloach Manot* bags to give to family and friends. *Todah rabah* to all the families who helped us in our efforts by bringing in items for their group.

The RS participants also voted on two organizations who will receive 10% of the Sisterhood's *Mishloach Manot* proceeds.

The Religious School will be donating 5% of the Sisterhood's proceeds to the Humane Society of the United States and Alyn Hospital in Jerusalem. The Humane Society of the United States is the nation's largest and most effective animal protection organization. The HSUS seeks a humane and sustainable world for all animals—a world that will also benefit people. The HSUS has many locations across the US that rescues animals and helps find them loving and safe homes.

Alyn Hospital leads in the field of pediatric and adolescent rehabilitation both in the Middle East and throughout the world. Over the years Alyn Hospital has developed a wealth of expertise in such fields as the treatment of trauma and head injuries from terrorist attacks, road and domestic accidents, neuro-muscular diseases, cerebral palsy, spina bifida, congenital deformities, general pediatric orthopedics, patients needing intermediate ventilation, special feeding management, cancer and burns.

Yishar Koach to the Sisterhood on their efforts and we look forward to partnering with you again for future projects.

— *Rebecca Elkus, Religious School staff and participants*

OUR MISHLOACH MANOT FUNDRAISING PROJECT – A SUCCESS!

For the first time in recent memory, this year we undertook a Mishloach Manot fundraising project at Habonim. Mishloach Manot (literally, "sending of portions"), are gifts of food or drink that are sent to friends, relatives, neighbors, teachers, business associates, and any other acquaintances on Purim. The mitzvah of giving Mishloach Manot derives from the Book of Esther, which commands the Jewish people to observe the days of Purim "as days of feasting and gladness, and sending portions of food to one another, and gifts to those in need" (9:22).

Many synagogues facilitate the performance of the mitzvah by creating and distributing Mishloach Manot gifts and also by donating some portion of the monies collected from Mishloach Manot to charity. This year, Sisterhood spearheaded this project at Habonim. With the assistance of many members of the congregation, we prepared and delivered nearly 500 festive holiday gift bags (Mishloach Manot) and we are contributing 10% of all funds raised to 2 charitable organizations chosen by the students of our Religious School: namely, the Humane Society of the United States and Alyn Hospital in Jerusalem.

We are very pleased to report that the Mishloach Manot project was a success in every way. All costs of the project were underwritten by Sisterhood and therefore all funds raised were profit for the synagogue. Aside from raising money, we also had the goal of involving many members of the Habonim community so that we could get to know each other better as we worked together on a common project. We are very thankful to the small army of nearly 40 volunteers who helped out on some aspect of this project. And of course, in the end, we enjoyed the tasty treat of the Mishloach Manot themselves.

We hope that the Habonim community enjoyed the fruits of our labors and we look forward to participating in a new Habonim tradition – the giving of Mishloach Manot – for many years to come.

— *Mary Sanders*

SPECIAL SCREENING OF

"THE FORGOTTEN REFUGEES"

Please join the Sisterhood, Brotherhood and Israel Committee for a special screening at Habonim of *The Forgotten Refugees* on Sunday, April 5th from 10:30am to 12:30pm.

Perfectly themed for Passover, this award-winning documentary features testimony from some of the one million Jews who fled Egypt, Libya, Iraq, Yemen, Morocco and Iran in the turbulent years after 1945. Personal stories of refugees are interspersed with dramatic archival footage, including the mission to rescue Yemenite Jews. Come learn about the rich heritage and destruction of the Middle East's age-old Jewish communities, some of which had existed for over 2,500 years.

We invite you to join us at Habonim for Minyan at 9:30am followed by a bagel Kiddush. Following this service, we will screen the 49-minute film and end the program with a brief discussion.

To RSVP please contact the office at (212)787-5347, x13 or send an email to office@habonim.net