

ETZ CHAIM SEPHARDIC CONGREGATION

B"H

Mailing Address: PO Box 80004 Indianapolis, IN 46280

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PASSOVER APRIL 8

Purim, Passover, and Miracles

By Itamar Cohen

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The Jewish year begins with Passover, which is in the month of Nissan, the first month, and ends with Purim which is in Adar, the twelfth month. This peculiarity occurs because our New Year is in the seventh month, strange, but true! We didn't make up the calendar; G-d did, so he is to blame for the confusion.

Never the less, there is a profound point in Passover coming in the first month and Purim in the last month. Let us analyze this and we will come to a profound understanding of the nature of miracles.

Passover marks the beginning of the Jews becoming a people. It was a time that forged its national identity and values. We left Egypt amidst the most unbelievable miracles that could be imagined. Starting with the ten plagues, which included the Nile turning into blood and the slaying of all the first born of Egypt, it culminated with the miraculous splitting of the Red Sea, saving the Jewish people and killing the advancing armored Egyptian armies. Continued on page 4.

A View From The Street

By William Levy

I told you there was "stuff" coming down the road and it was all good and all important. Starting with the general membership meeting on Sunday, December 21st. and I estimating around 30 "members". As usual we keep telling everyone how important it is that everyone be there so they can all be heard and we can know what is "going right" and what is "going wrong". Unfortunately as is our history, we don't seem to have enough "issues" pique the interests; so attendance is "marginal" (means: way less than we want). I guess the old adage of "if it ain't broke don't fix it" applies at Etz. Of course a temperature right at 9 degrees with wind chill below zero, may have had some effect on attendance as well. Right now we're riding this wave of "almost out of debt" euphoria. What is unsaid is the bit about the endowment and how that really is going to need everyone's support. I won't even mention the state of the economy. An Obama light at the end of the tunnel? I hope so, a lot of people are counting on that. The of course there is still Larry's mikva campaign, also "unsettled" (means: unfunded). We had the standard secretary, treasurer, cemetery reports. Nothing out of "sort: in those reports. There was a mention of putting together a synagogue "wish list" so potential donor's could know what they might consider "giving". Makes sense to me. I remember when the ladies put together a kitchen "shower" where people could go over a listing of things needed for the then new kitchen and sign on. A lot of product was generated. Now we just need to expand that shower technique and include general stuff, kitchen stuff and office stuff and give people a chance to make a meaningful donation. There was some mention of an additional TV that we could use upstairs for DVD showing including cartoons for the kids when the "theater unit" is busy downstairs. Several volunteers on that one already. I think Mike Alboher has a decent unit that he "volunteered". Not much happened beyond that. I was a little surprised that Honoree Larry didn't seize the opportunity to make a little mikva pitch, you never know when you're going to get a bunch of Sephardic's seated and quiet. Not a lot of audience at this meeting, probably waiting for a bigger event. If you were at the "dinner" you know he does know how to make a meaningful and humorous speech. Stay tuned for Larry, that project has not been abandoned; trust me on that.

The whole “deal” was adjourned within a hour of “start time”. I am going to go out on a “limb” but for me the highlight of the meeting was probably Leon Mordoh’s jacket; very warm looking and plenty “spiffy”. I was tempted to run home and put on my Mark Perlman “hand-me-down” fur, but I didn’t have the time or the guts. Anyway, Leon wear it in good health.

Parisa and her “team” came up with a great Chanukah celebration day on Thursday, December 25th which just happens to coincide with the “other” celebration day which shall remain anonymous. The original plan/flyer called for a movie for adults and cartoons for the kids and a Chinese dinner as a finale. Just give these gals some room and they will come up with something for Etz members to attend and enjoy. Could not have been nicer. There doesn’t seem to be an “ethnic food limit” with these gals. Name a country, they’ll do a meal. According to the “books” (means: Annie’s pay records) there were right at 55 “diners”. The movie ended up being Mamma Mia, which unfortunately got off to a late start owing again to some technical snafus. It seems that there are only 1 or 2 designated operators of our “high tech” theatrical equipment and neither one was on the premises at the appointed hour. After some panic 911 call, one of them showed and the movie was “on”; then on “pause” during the dining interlude. I don’t know how many actually stayed for the balance of the movie. I didn’t. The planned kids cartoon “thing” never did come to pass. That was more complicated. All we had on hand was Mike’s TV, but no DVD player. That project was “scratched” for an equipment deficiency. We can remedy all of that stuff, just better planning on the collateral stuff. The food on the other hand, was authentic, plentiful, and savory. Food we, we’ll learn the rest. Hats off to Parisa and “staff”. They are fearless and very, very good. Thank you ladies.

A MUST READ: To all of us that share the hurt of Israel and it’s continual struggle to exist, I found a most enlightening editorial article in the Indianapolis Star on Thursday, January 1st. We have heard and read plenty of negative condemnation of Israel’s defensive response to Hamas in Gaza. Not many seem to quietly reflect on the situation and view it from the Israeli perspective until today’s editorial authored by a Deroy Murdock, who is black and a media fellow with the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace at Stanford University. The article is too lengthy to include in this note, but my intent is to post a copy at the synagogue and send a copy of the article to all of the Indiana senators and representatives. After the 20th I’ll probably send one to our new president as well. A couple of quotes from the article... “Israelis withdrew from Gaza in August 2005. Between Israel’s disengagement from Gaza through last Nov 30, Palestinian forces fired 3,123 rockets into southern Israel. Hamas fired 177 missiles at Israel, and even during June 19-Dec 19, 2008 ‘state of calm’. Indeed, rockets are Gaza’s chief export. Gazans also fire 2,299 mortar shells into Israel since 2005. Israelis traded land for peace. Instead, they got land for pieces of shrapnel. Since Israel withdrew, Gaza’s rockets and mortars have pummeled southern Israel, killing 17, wounding 851 and terrorizing some 200,000. Israel had had it with these explosions and casualties. It is defending itself appropriately, despite complaints that Israel’s response is not proportional. As Gazans curse Israel’s jets, they should remind themselves that they had a perfect chance to make the world proud, and they blew it. Gaza’s leaders had the opportunity of a millennium. They could have said “now watch us flourish”. The world would have come running to help elevate this benighted, Denver-sized territory into an oasis from which the mirage of Middle East Peace could blossom into reality – if Gazans only asked. But no. Top Gazans had a different development strategy: “Fling rockets at Israel.” My comment, how true, how sad. Too international for you?? I just finished reading that article and the very next day another very supportive article in the Star from a Cal Thomas. Again way too lengthy to include but I’ll just give you a concluding quote... “Israel already has given up too much. Every concession has been met with more war. It is time to finish the job. No more delays; no more cease-fires or truces, which merely allow Hamas to dig new tunnels and smuggle in reinforcements and more weapons with which they kill more Israeli civilians...Israel’s goal should be peace through strength. The United States should commit to building up Israel, militarily and diplomatically, as a deterrent to Israel’s enemies, many of who also hate and wish to destroy America.” At least there are some who understand the Israeli dilemma, the need to defend with sufficient force to defeat the Hamas militancy against the other media frenzy to showcase the dead, the maimed, the wailing mother. War is never pretty. I pray for the time that war is **never** needed; dreaming, but so what. Amen.

I was once again that Sephardic Jew just do not “do” cold weather. Simple. Must have something to do with our Mediterranean roots. Saturday morning, January 17th, the day following our 12 below zero reading, I encouraged the sparse group that attended services to remind all of their friends and neighbors, that had not already fled to warmer “environs”, that we are still “open for business” during the winter months. We got our minyan early but not many “stragglers”. Oh well, the plus side is that wall had more “huevos” to eat, which for some reason seemed especially tasty that morning. New formula? Your loss.

A golden opportunity for someone to enter into the “lucrative” journalist field has unfortunately presented itself for some yet unidentified soul to become a member of the elite staff of the Etz Chaim bulletin. A highly sought-

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Color Pictures of all our events !

after position. You will receive the identical compensation that everyone else “affiliated” with the bulletin receives. Don’t ask. Plus we are an “equal opportunity” employer which means we do not ask embarrassing questions about your age, weight, gender or religion although we would prefer some “Jewishness”, beyond that “anything goes”. Those of you that read this bi-monthly “note” are aware that we have again lost our cooking/recipe “maven”. Surely there is someone out there who will “seize the moment” and step up to take over the prestigious cooking/recipe segment of the bulletin. After all, where would we be without food? Important enough for you? I suspect the “firs caller” will win the coveted spot, so do not hesitate. Contact editor Irv or President Alan, they anxiously await your call. I’m told there is also a “Plan B” if this doesn’t generate a “candidate”.

The Super Bowl “gathering” was a modest success – around 60 plus folks showed up to dine and watch a very exciting game on our deluxe HD TV. As is my custom I was on the wrong side of the “bet” so I made my annual contribution to Al Passo’s benevolent retirement fund. Not to worry it was only five bucks. I do not fall into the “high roller” category by any body’s standard. Arizona seemed to be the sentimental favorite, the underdog. Almost “pulled it off”. The food was “right on” as usual thanks to our mother daughter team, Rakhel and Parisa. Everyone I saw was clearly enjoying the bill of fare and the price was definitely right. I distinctly recall however, mentioning in the last bulletin about how the ladies were wearing out their volunteer “welcome”. I think I used the terms overworked and overdone. Obviously no one reads these bi-monthly “notes” because the gals were still not “hiring” out the serving and the cleanup. It can’t be that much fun and the savings can’t be that much, so why keep doing it and why shouldn’t I just stop being concerned. Have I reached the point of being irrelevant? Are people “putting up” with me because I’m old and seem to be around a lot? I can’t even seem to whip up a good ole’ controversy. Talk to me, I have this bizarre “need to know”.

The Board met on Tuesday, February 10th. I counted about 13 “attendees”, enough for prayer, plus deal with any congregational “issues” which fortunately did not surface. So things went rather predictably. Minutes, treasurer and cemetery were all on “pace”. There was mention of a clean-up at the cemetery by a group as a part of “their beautification project”. Can never get too much of that kind of volunteer help. However it does remind me that we haven’t had a cemetery “paint-in” for a couple of years, so probably ought to be giving that some “scheduling thought”.

Robbie listed a number of “thing” that the Sisterhood was putting together. All right up their alley. One disquieting note was some mention that our famous annual bake sale was in jeopardy of being “sacked”. I don’t have the detail on “why” but hopefully she can outline that in her “piece”. I would hate to see that “go down the tubes” – it’s our token equivalent of the Greek Festival. Just keeps getting better in my view. Must have something to do with “aging bakers”. I don’t know. We’ll all find out at the same time.

Larry rose to speak to the Mikva project. Says will have to note in this bulletin. Read it!! I sense the problem is not having a real “handle” on the real numbers. Stay tuned.

We are back on track – we had two new membership apps, both of which were approved. Gisele Greenberg and Riki Rose. I hope I got the names right. Welcome ladies. Adjourned after that.

Everyone stay well. Con Salud. – W. Levy

President’s Corner

By Alan Cohen

The Annual Meeting in December covered a wide variety of topics. We discussed topics ranging from the operating budget, revenues, growth and items we wish to work on in the coming months. We normally have this meeting in December but this coming year we anticipate having it earlier, just after the High Holidays, so we can have more members attend. These topics are discussed in our Board of Director’s meetings every other month, and we are always looking for feedback from our membership, so if you wish to discuss any specific item don’t hesitate to contact me at president@etzchaimindy.org or leave a message at the office number (251-6220).

We have several events we are putting together this year with groups who are looking to work with other Sephardic Congregations from throughout the country in a way to promote the Sephardic Culture, and we hope to have their involvement here in Indianapolis. These events take time to put together, but we hope to have weekend events that will include Friday Evening Services, and a speaker for Shabbat along with a special Oneg. We will let everyone know well in advance of these upcoming events.

Itamar Cohen, Cont.

When we think of miracles, we reckon the splitting of the Red Sea as the *magnus opus* of the miracles. Here each individual saw a tremendous supernatural occurrence. From this exodus, our national character was formed. Our unswerving belief in the G-d of gods, the King of kings, was founded and has continued with each generation. Passover was the time that our belief in G-d was developed beyond a mere intellectual concept. Through the open miracles that our forefathers witnessed, our national identity became firm and unyielding and our individual belief became unshakable.

All this was due to the massive occurrence of miracles during the time of the exodus from Egypt.

During the time of Purim, we also witnessed miracles. However the Talmud debates exactly what the miracle was. Was it that Achasverous could not sleep or that Esther made her wine feasts? It is not really clear what the miracle was. Certainly it was not a clear and open miracle. The name of G-d (the chief performer of miracles) is not even mentioned in the Migalah.

Why is this?

The answer is very simple, yet deep.

G-d unquestionably rules the world. He alone possesses the ability to change nature. He changes the hearts of kings and rulers. He is the ultimate cause; we only see the effects.

He possesses two ways to affect changes. One is through the suspension of nature; the other is within the natural process.

Miracles through the suspension of nature, such as the splitting of the Red Sea, impress upon us G-d's ability to rule the world in a very absolute and undeniable manner. Water, whose nature is to fall, changes and stands like a stone. This is a major change in the nature of water. It is not water as we know it. It is similar to water, but not exactly water, since it does not fall. The nature of water changed and then later it reverts back to its original form. The second form of miracles (the ones that occur within the nature but without nature changing) show something different. Perhaps we are not overtaken or initially impressed by them since they are not evident as miracles.

However, they show the complete compatibility of nature to performing the will of G-d. In this form of nature, nature does not change, the laws and rules of nature are in effect, yet the logical outcome of nature is changed.

What should have happened, didn't. Instead of nature being changed to produce results that comply with the will of G-d, nature complied with the will of G-d to produce results that were compatible with the will of G-d.

Perhaps to us, the third party observer, this is a lesser miracle since we can neither comprehend nor apprehend the actions of G-d without contemplation. To nature, however this is a greater and more difficult accomplishment, since nature remained nature, maintaining all of its inherent properties which should have not permitted such an occurrence from happening, yet nature did it anyway.

Looking at it from another vantage point, it is likened to a slave who is forced against his will to do the will of his master. Through coercion, the master forces the servant to accomplish his tasks. The servant's inherent desires and nature are changed by pressure from without, temporarily, to accomplish his task. Yet, a greater advantage comes when the servant is convinced through his own reasoning that doing the masters will is greater importance than his own desires. Here the servant remains a servant, yet his will is not forced to change because his will is to perform the will of his master.

Similarly, the individual Jew, who undertakes to perform the commandments of his own volition is on a much higher level than he who performs the commandments in order to secure his own personal reward. Performing commandments of the Creator, to achieve personal benefit does not show any positive individual initiative, but rather a subtle coercion based on personal gain. Only he who serves G-d with a true desire to do only G-d's will remains true to his own personal inner nature, since every Jew desires only to be at one with G-d, yet, like nature, this performance gives much satisfaction to his Creator.

This is the message of Purim and it's hidden miracles. Only through a service based on not receiving nor seeking reward can a person achieve his goal. He has not changed, he has revealed to himself his own personal inner spiritual dimension; he is he, yet as he is, he serves G-d.

The person who takes reward or makes it a basis of service, whether in form of honor, money, or next world pleasures, must disregard his natural personality to accommodate this service since it is does not come from his heart.

In Purim, all is hidden. The true service to G-d is hidden. Falsity together with its onerous baselessness which is destined to fail is not considered. Only the inner dimension, that which exposes our true desire for G-d is revealed, but only to us and not for public viewing.

Mikvah Committee

By Larry Greenbaum

At the February Etz Chaim board meeting, the board decided to begin to assemble a committee to proceed with the construction of our mikvah. As I mentioned previously, the mikvah has been low on cash and low on momentum. Although we are still low on cash, momentum seems to be on the increase. I was delighted that so many board members are interested in making the mikvah a reality.

The make up and goals of the new committee are not fully defined yet, but I think they will include the following:

- Review architectural plans for the mikvah,
- Raise interest in this project in our community,
- Attract people knowledgeable about the subject of mikvah observance,
- Education about this mitzvah,
- Raise money.

I hope to have more information on these topics added to our outstanding web site (www.etzchaimindy.org) in the near future. Anyone that is interested in helping out can contact me at lgreenbaum@sbcglobal.net.

President's Corner, Continued.

We are looking to continue our Recipe Column, either with a dedicated person or asking our members to send in their favorite recipes to share with the Congregation. If you wish to submit a recipe please send them to president@etzchaimindy.org or contact Parisa Kesari at the office, 251-6220. I know we have some exceptional cooks within our membership; it would be a great opportunity to share these with everyone, so if you are open to sharing the "secret's" please help us continue this tradition for the upcoming newsletters.

If you have suggestions or concerns that you wish to bring forward please contact me or any of our Board Members at your convenience. We will post a list of Board Members on the Website and it is important for us to have feedback, both good and bad, from the membership. We (the Board) are all volunteers, and it is important for us to get feedback so we can continue to serve in the best interests of the entire congregation.

Sephardic Music Festival

Festival Music Society presents **Quartetto Brio** in a special concert of **Sephardic music** sung by **dazzling Brazilian countertenor Jose Lemos**. Lemos is noted worldwide for his unique artistry in opera and concert. Mr. Lemos made his U.S. opera debut at the Tanglewood Music Festival and his European debut at the Zurich Opernhaus. This spring he will perform at the prestigious London Royal Festival Hall.

The **March 22 Indianapolis** concert, sponsored by the Glick Foundation and also by Illene Maurer, explores Sephardic music, the unique folk music of the Spanish Jews, which has existed in the oral tradition for centuries. Quartetto Brio performs on period instruments. This 7:30 p.m. concert, taking place at the Basile Auditorium of the Glick History Center in downtown Indianapolis is a prelude to the Indianapolis Early Music Festival taking place in June and July at the new Basile Opera House.

Tickets are on sale at www.emindy.org or by calling 317 577-9731. The ticket price is \$15. A reception with members of Quartetto Brio and Jose Lemos follows the concert. Seating is general seating and parking at the History Center is free.

**Looking for a Special Recipe? Contact us and we will publish these in
Upcoming Bulletin's !**

Chili

Chop large fresh onion
 Chop 3-4 large cloves of fresh garlic
 Pre heat large pot
 Add olive oil to cover bottom of pot
 Add onions and garlic and sauté until onions are translucent
 Add 2# ground beef
 Brown the meat in the onions and garlic
 When completely cooked, drain the fat
 Add 1 16 oz can of tomato sauce
 Add 1 16 oz can of tomato puree
 Add 1 16 oz can of crushed tomatoes
 Add 1 16 oz can of water
 Add 2 16 oz cans of light red kidney beans
 Mix well, cover and begin to simmer
 Add Mexene chili powder to taste
 Simmer (covered) for 15 – 20 minutes, stirring often
 Serve over pasta and add cheese, sour cream, and Tabasco Sauce to taste
 Pretzels and/or Oyster crackers are good with it, too

Lima Beans

Chop a small onion
 Sauté in a sauce pan with olive oil until translucent
 Add one cup of water
 Add two packages of frozen baby limas
 Add Hungarian Paprika (quite a bit)
 Cook limas to directions on lima box

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**We have opportunities available for
families who wish to sponsor an
Oneg for a loved one Anyo.
Contact Parisa Kesari at 251-6220
for additional information! There
is a variety of choices available to
choose from, call for info !**

***Looking for a special
recipe ?***

***Let us know what you
would like to see in future
issues***

***Send in your requests to
president@etzchaimindy.org !***

SISTERHOOD PRESIDENT **A NOTE FROM ROBBIE**

By: Robbie Ettinger:

CHANUKAH TEA:

We had a great turn out thank you Eleanor Glickstein who was a perfect chair. The ladies had fun picking out surprise gifts and having all the delicious sweets set out in a beautiful display. We gave to the Gleaner Food Bank thank you to all who made contributions and we gave to the adopt a family program from Federation. I loved my umbrella that I picked it is in my car and I thank the person who gave it.

STANDING ROOM ONLY

The Super Bowl Supper: 85 people and what a great time they had. Thank you as always to our dynamic do woe Rakhel Farahan and Parisa Keisari. Thank you also to everyone who helped them cook, set up and take down. I know that Larry came home very happy and very full!

Tu'B Shevat was very nice with nuts and dates all over at the Oneg. Thank you ladies.

PURIM:

All children large and small (large) being the adults please dress up and come to the Kahal we will have a parade and then after the reading of the Megillah refreshments will be served. Guess what you will have? Hamantaschen FOR SURE! Everyone enjoy.

THE SPRING FLING LUNCH:

A date has not been set but you will get the invitation in the mail. All I can say is that it is in May.

THE FEDERATION ALL SISITERHOOD LADIES DINNER:

This year our Honoree from Deborah will be ANNA SOLOOKI she had worked so hard and is most deserving of this honor. Cost of this dinner is \$25.00 per ticket.

THANK YOU:

The Abrams family made a large gift donation to the sisterhood.

MAZEL TOV:

Naomi Cohen the daughter of (Dina & Itamar) on your first Birthday and full recovery from her surgery.

WE WISH A SPEEDY RECOVERY TO:

Esther Calderon, Shi Camhi, Jack Cohen, Juliette Farahan, Shelly Farahan, Sion Solooki, Norma & Leon Shore.

HAVE A HAPPY AND HEALTHY PASSOVER:

The kitchen will be closed on Passover the last Oneg will be on April 4th and start again on April 18th.

THANK YOU IRIT BOUKAI:

Irit has had to give up her Vice Presidency of the sisterhood due to her work demands. We all love and thank you for the wonderful programs you have given and we know you know that we are all here for you and support you in this and everything you do.

I MUST CHANGE MY PRESIDENCY:

I am sorry to say that due to health issues I will have to change the way I am doing things. I must give up the physical side of the Sisterhood I will still do the paper work and write the newsletter. I just cannot be at the Kahal as much as I would like. Meetings will be had and run by Eleanor Glickstein. I would like to thank everyone for all your love a support.

PLEASE BE SAFE:

Interested in making a Donation to Etz Chaim

Sisterhood offers donations for Prayer Books as well as the opportunity to send messages of happiness or condolences. If you have an interest in learning more about Sisterhood options please **contact Carol Cohen at 317-334-9810 or mail to PO Box 80004, Indianapolis, IN 46280**

If you are interested in making donations to our operating accounts call 251-6220 or email to president@etzchaimindy.org

The Hymen A. Cohen Cemetery Fund
(used **solely** for the operations of our Cemeteries)

The Libby Fogle Building Fund
(used solely towards the Building Fund Obligations)

The Leon M. Mordoh Endowment Fund
(used solely for future endowment activities)

The Mikveh Fund
(used solely for the future Mikvah)

Etz Chaim

**6939 Hoover Road
Indianapolis, IN 46260
317-251-6220**

Email: kahal@etzchaimindy.org

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