



HAKOL

“THE VOICE”

The Newsletter

TEMPLE B'NAI SHALOM

41 STORRS AVENUE, BRAINTREE, MA

www.tbsbraintree.com

March, April, May 2017
Adar, Nisan, Iyar & Sivan 5777

SPRING, 2017


Shabbat Services, Saturday at 9:15 AM

*Rabbi Van Lanckton, Cantor Seth Grossman, President Dr. Peter Kurzberg,
Bulletin Editor Judy Karll*



A SWEET & KOSHER PASSOVER

March, 2017 Adar & Nisan 5777 *Candle lighting

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|-------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|--|
| | | | 3 Adar 1 | 2 | 3 *5:20 PM | 4 Parashat Terumah SHABBAT ACROSS AMERICA – KIDDUSH Rabbi Lanckton |
| U 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 11 Adar 9 FAST OF ESTHER | 10 *5:29 PM | 11 Parashat Tetzaveh Rabbi Ma'ayan Sands will participate in the service |
| 14 Adar 12 PURIM | 13  SHUSHAN PURIM | 14 | 15 TBS BOARD MEETIING | 16 | 17 *6:37 PM | 18 Parashat Ki Tisa Parah Rabbi Lanckton |
| 19 | 20  FIRST DAY OF SPRING | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 *6:45 PM | 25 Parashat Vayakhel-Pekudei Hachodesh |
| 26 | 27 | 1 Nisan 28 ROSH CHODESH | 29 | 30 | 31 *6:53 PM | |

May, 2017 – Iyer, Sivan 5777

*Shabbat candle lighting

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|--|---------------|-------------------------------|---|
| | 5 Iyar 1 OMER 20 Yom Harikaron | 2 OMER 21 Yom Haatzma'ut | 3 OMER 22 | 4 OMER 23 | 5 OMER 24 *7:32 PM | 6 OMER 25 Parashat Acharei-Kedoshim |
| 7 OMER 26 SISTERHOOD DONOR | 8 OMER 27 | 9 OMER 28 | 10 OMER 29 | 11 OMER 30 | 12 OMER 31 *7:40 PM | 13 OMER 32 Parashat Emor Rabbi Lanckton |
| OMER 33 14 MOTHER'S DAY  Lag Ba'Omer | 15 OMER 34 | 16 OMER 35 | 17 OMER 36 TBS BOARD MEETING | 18 OMER 37 | 19 OMER 38 *7:47 PM | 20 OMER 39 Parashat Behar-Bechukotal |
| 21 OMER 40 | 22 OMER 41 Victoria Day Canada | 23 OMER 42 | 24 OMER 43 Yom Yerushalayim | 25 OMER 44 | 26 OMER 45 *7:53 PM | 27 OMER 46 Parashat Rabbi Lanckton |
| 28 OMER 47 | 29 OMER 48  Memorial Day | 30 OMER 49 Erev Shavout | 31 Shavout | | | |

ON June 1 the Second Day of Shavout – Yizkor is said

DONATION PAGE

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INSCRIBED BOOK PLATES: () High Holiday Mahzor \$ 20.00

ENGRAVED PLAQUES: () Tree of Life \$ 72.00

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Wording for High Holiday Mahzor Book Plate:

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Name of Deceased _____

Date of Birth _____ Date of Death _____

Rabbi Greenberg Scholarship: Donation amount \$ _____

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Kiddush: Donation \$75 – basic Kiddush

Table Cloth: \$12 per name _____

Check payable to: Temple B'nai Shalom Mail to: 41 Storrs Ave, Braintree, MA 02184 ATTN: MARYLOU



Message from Rabbi Van Lanckton

Season of Our Celebrations

In the next three months, we will celebrate the last three major Jewish holidays in the current Jewish year of 5777: Purim, Pesach and Shavuot.

All these are festive holidays. The feeling of joy we associate with the coming of spring (at last) manifests as well in the observance of these three holidays.

Purim (the Jewish Halloween) March 11-12

- Costumes
- The inspiring story of Esther's rescues of the Jewish people of Persia
- Celebrations so raucous that we are supposed to become intoxicated to the point of being unable to distinguish between Haman and Mordecai
- *Sh'lach manot*, providing gifts of food and treats to our friends and neighbors.

Pesach April 10 – 18

- Gatherings of families and friends for the Seder
- Retelling the story of our liberation from Egypt
- Teaching that story to our children and grandchildren
- Spring cleaning that culminates ritually searching for hametz (traditionally with a candle to light the way and a feather to brush up the crumbs) and burning the remains of hametz in the back yard.

Shavuot May 30 – June 1

- Concluding the counting of the Omer
- Celebrating the giving and receiving the Torah at Sinai
- Festive meals with blintzes and sour cream and other delicious dairy dishes

As we move beyond the divisive season of our national elections last fall, I hope we can turn our attention increasingly to the celebration of these family holidays and traditions.

I wish us all a *Freilichen* Purim, a *Zissen* Pesach and a *Freydik* Shavout.

Hag Sameach!

Rabbi Van Lanckton vlanckton@verizon.net 617-694-2438



*Message from the Temple
President*

Shalom,

I hope you have stayed warm and safe with all of the snow and ice we have had, as well as having enjoyed a touch of spring.

We have a few wonderful things to report. First a **SPECIALTHANK YOU** to all who contributed with an end of the year donation. We collected a total of \$9,106!! Your generosity is truly appreciated and will help to continue to sustain us as a congregation. For those who have not yet had a chance to contribute, it's still not too late.

A search committee has been formed to help find a new rabbi due to the retirement of Rabbi Lanckton. Members of the committee include Steve Karll, Laney Silva, Barry Belt, Marylou Fishman and yours truly. **Rabbi Ma'ayan Sands, a candidate for the position, will be our guest rabbi on March 11.** I hope you can join us.

Upcoming events include Shabbat Across America on Saturday, March 4 with a special Kiddush. On Sunday, April 2, is the Temple's Mitzvah Day. In the meantime, consider attending a Shabbat service. We are so fortunate to have Rabbi Lanckton and Cantor Grossman as our religious leaders. You will be surprised how much you enjoy it.

Finally, thank you, again to all who volunteer so hard to make events at the temple happen. Your tireless efforts are sincerely appreciated

by all. If you have been "sitting on the sidelines" for a while, for whatever reason, consider participating a little more by helping out in any way you can. It is only through active participation and financial support that our temple is being kept alive. We are always looking for help in our kitchen on Saturday mornings. Please consider volunteering, even for an hour or for set up or clean up. Contact Paula Goldman at paulag@beld.net.

Wishing you and your family continued good health and looking forward to seeing you soon at temple.

Peter Kurzberg

Dates to calendar

March 4 Shabbat Across America
April 2 Mitzvah Day
April 10 First Seder
April 23 Men's Club Breakfast
May 7 Sisterhood Donor Brunch
June 4 Rabbi's Retirement Reception

DONATIONS MADE TO TEMPLE B'NAI SHALOM

IN MEMORY OF GEORGE SMITH

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GEORGE FAINER'S
BAR MITZVAH
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IN MEMORY OF HER
MOTHER, MOLLIE'S
30TH Yahrzeit
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IN MEMORY OF
ARTHUR LERNER'S
1ST Yahrzeit
PETER & KAREN KURZBERG
IN CELEBRATION OF
CHANUKAH
ADAM LITTMAN
IN MEMORY OF
HIS WIFE,
CAROLE'S Yahrzeit

Prayer Book

DAN & MARJORIE KOBRIN
IN MEMORY OF
GEORGE SMITH

Memorial Plaque

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IN MEMORY OF
NURIT KOVNAT

Mending by Meryl

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IN HONOR OF

JANICE FINE
IN HONOR OF
PAULA GOLDMAN'S
RECOVERY AFTER SURGERY
AND
JILL FISHMAN'S
RECOVERY AFTER SURGERY
ALLAN MORRIS
IN HONOR OF:
ADELE GOLDFIELD
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IN HONOR OF
GEORGE FAINER'S BAR MITZVAH

TEMPLE CONDOLENCES

TEMPLE B'NAI SHALOM MOURNS THE
LOSS OF OUR LONGTIME TEMPLE MEMBER
& FRIEND: GEORGE SMITH
CONDOLENCES TO THE SMITH FAMILY

TEMPLE MAZEL TOV

TEMPLE B'NAI SHALOM CONGRATULATES
STACEY BLOOM
ON HER NOMINATION AS
1ST VICE PRESIDENT OF
BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF JCRC

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THERE HAS BEEN AN
INCREASE IN THE DONATION
FOR YAHRZEIT & MEMORIAL
PLAQUES TO \$200,

DUE TO THE INCREASE OF OUR
COST.

**ALWAYS BRING NON-PERISHABLE
FOOD ITEMS TO BE RE-DONATED TO
THE MARGE CRISPIN FOOD PANTRY
WHENEVER YOU COME TO THE
TEMPLE.**

SPONSOR KIDDUSH



***Remember with TBS: a graduation,
wedding, anniversary, birthday, Mitzvah,
anniversary, Yahrzeit or something special
to you.***

\$75 for a basic Kiddush or embellished for an
additional fee. To sponsor a Shabbat Kiddush
contact either: Janice @ 508-230-5074
jan@janfine.com OR Marylou @ 617-921-0368
maryloufishman@comcast.net

MEMBERSHIP NOTICES

**AS A MEMBER OF THE TEMPLE, YOU
CAN BE NOTIFIED OF A FAMILY MEMBER'S
YAHRZEIT & THE REMEMBRANCE WILL
ALSO BE MENTIONED AT THE SHABBAT
SERVICE PRIOR TO THE HEBREW
ANNIVERSARY. PLEASE SEND THE
FOLLOWING INFORMATION: NAME OF
DECEASED, DATE OF PASSING AS WELL
AS THE TIME IF KNOWN TO: MERYL
SMITH meryljoys@aol.com**

SHABBAT ACROSS AMERICA

JOIN US FOR KIDDUSH

**AFTER SHABBAT SERVICE
SATURDAY, MARCH 4TH**

**Do you or anyone in your family shop
on
AMAZON.COM**

Thanks to congregants who shop on
AMAZON.COM, Temple B'nai Shalom receives a
check for a percentage of their sales each month
from Amazon.

Next time you have something to order:

Go to The Temple's Website:
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Click on: **GIVING**

Click on: **SHOPPING OPPORTUNITES**

Shop



This year's MASSPASS Books are available for \$20 per book.

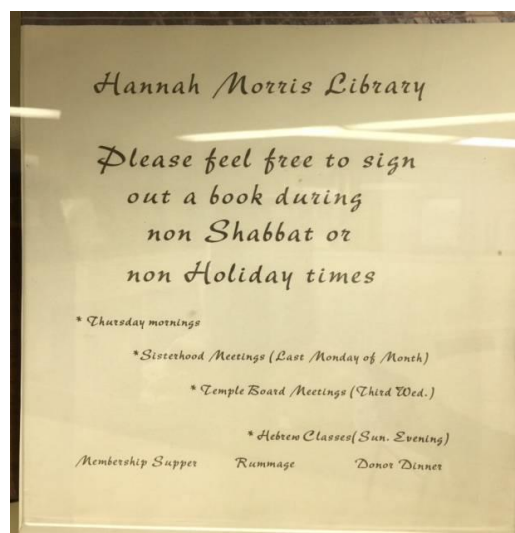
On a first to order basis, you will receive a free Temple B'nai Shalom Cookbook with each Masspass book!

This has been a very successful fundraiser for the temple in the past several years. So, please support us again this year!

Contact: Audrey Mallock audrabm@gmail.com or Marylou Fishman maryloufishman@comcast.net

TEMPLE HANNAH MORRIS LIBRARY

On the first floor of the Temple



HOLOCAUST STAMP COLLECTION UPDATE MERYL SMITH, CHAIR

THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU! WITH YOUR HELP WE HAVE COLLECTED OVER **25.900 STAMPS** FOR THE HOLOCAUST STAMP PROJECT AT THE FOXBOROUGH CHARTER SCHOOL. THE CHILDREN ARE TRYING TO COLLECT 11 MILLION STAMPS TO REPRESENT THE NUMBER OF VICTIMS MURDERED BY THE NAZIS DURING WORLD WORK II. THEY ARE CREATING BEAUTIFUL ARTWORK (AS SEEN ABOVE) WITH THE STAMPS SO PEOPLE WILL NEVER FORGET HITLER'S HORRIFIC MASSACRE OF INNOCENT MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN. FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO WOULD LIKE TO HELP, PLEASE SAVE USED POSTAGE STAMPS, YOU KNOW THE ONES WE SO QUICKLY THROW ALWAYS WITHOUT GIVING IT A THOUGHT. SIMPLY CUT OR RIP THEM OFF THE CORNER OF THE ENVELOPE AND DROP THEM OFF IN THE COLLECTION BOX IN THE TEMPLE FOYER OR IN THE MAIL SLOT AT 154 GRANGER STREET, QUINCY. ONCE AGAIN THANK YOU TO THOSE WHO ARE HELPING TO EDUCATE THE NEXT GENERATION, SO THIS WILL NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN.

TEMPLE B'NAI SHALOM BOARD

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FEEL FREE TO CONTACT:

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TBS CHAIR YOGA CLASS



Chair Yoga Classes Offered

Join the Chair Yoga Class
At the Temple on Thursdays at
10 AM for one hour.

The instructor is Joyce Jordan. Joyce is a certified yoga teacher as well as a certified nutritional & wellness consultant. Classes are for men and women. The cost is \$10 per week, paid monthly at the beginning of each month. Although the class has been ongoing, there is no problem joining at any time. Come and observe a week to see if it's for you.

If you have any questions contact:
Marylou at maryloufishman@comcast.net or
call 617-921-0368

SUPPORT THE TEMPLE BUY SCRIP

AS AN ONGOING FUND RAISER, THE TEMPLE SELLS STOP & SHOP AND ROCHE BROS. GIFT CARDS IN \$25, \$50 AND \$100 DENOMINATIONS.

SELLERS INCLUDE: NANCY RESNICK, FLORENCE KOFFMAN AND JANICE FINE. ARRANGEMENTS CAN BE MADE FOR HOME DELIVERY BY CONTACTING ONE OF THE SELLERS OR MARYLOU @ 617-921-0368.



**DO YOU NEED A SEDER
PLATE?**

FIND ONE AND MANY OTHER
JUDAICA ITEMS

ON

TEMPLE B'NAI SHALOM'S
***HADASSAH'S RE-SALE SHOP
TABLE***

THE DONATION YOU MAKE FOR
YOUR ITEMS TO HADASSAH WILL
SUPPORT THE EXTRAORDINARY
WORK THAT IS BEING DONE IN
ISRAEL THAT BENEFITS MANKIND
THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

**LADIES:
SAVE THE DATE
SUNDAY
MAY 7TH**

SISTERHOOD

DONOR BRUNCH

10:30 TO 12:30

AT

THE GRANITE GRILLE

IT'S TIME FOR ANOTHER

DERBY HAT CONTEST

FLYER TO FOLLOW

A DAY OF MITZVAH

SUNDAY

APRIL 2

PLEASE BRING NON-PERISHABLE
DRY GOODS THAT YOU WILL
REMOVE FROM YOUR PANTRY
OVER PASSOVER TO TEMPLE
SHABBAT SERVICE TO BE
DONATED TO THE FOOD PANTRY.

THE HEBREW SCHOOL CLASS
MITZVAH WILL AGAIN DECORATE
FLOWER PLANTERS, TO BE GIFTED
TO RESIDENTS OF THE HEBREW
SENIOR LIFE CENTER FOR THE
PASSOVER HOLIDAY; WITH
DISCUSSION ON MITZVOT.



SAVE THE DATE

JUNE 4TH

RABBI VAN LANCKTON'S

RETIREMENT

RECEPTION

9:30 – 11:30 AM

Community Awareness
Information on
LOCAL BUILDING PROJECT
PROPOSAL
Public hearing March 13
Braintree Town Hall 7 PM

The following is an update on a building project proposal that will impact Braintree Square and surrounding neighborhoods, including Storrs Avenue. Holland Companies has submitted a proposal to build a 70 apartment complex building located behind the businesses on Washington Street. In addition, 8 condominiums would be built on Storrs Avenue on the parking lot area across the street from the temple. The apartment complex would be a single unit, three story building and include 4 studios units, 30-1 bedroom units, 29-2 bedroom units and 7-3 bedroom affordable housing units. The condominiums would be 3 bedrooms. Entrance and exits for the apartments and condominiums would be off of Washington Street (Next to Dependable Cleaners) and Storrs Avenue. (Next to what is now the driveway into the parking lots.) The number of apartments being proposed exceeds by threefold the number of units for which the property is zoned. Therefore, the building will be going before the Braintree Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) seeking a variance. Our own Steve Karll, is chairman of that board. In addition, the builder is utilizing a provision known as a 40B (affordable housing) to circumvent the zoning by-laws. The neighborhood is upset with the project due to its size, the impact of traffic it would create in the surrounding neighborhoods, fears that construction will create water problems for

neighbors and hazardous material which may be discovered on site. Traffic, water problems and hazardous waste could all have an impact on the temple as well. The North Braintree Civic Association has been very vocal and active in attempting to halt this project as it is currently being proposed. On Monday, March 13 at 7:00 PM, Holland Companies will be appearing before the Zoning Board. The meeting will take place at Braintree Town Hall. The meeting is open to the public

TEMPLE MEN'S CLUB

SPONSORS

A SPRING FLING BREAKFAST

APRIL 23

SUNDAY, 9:30 AM

GUEST SPEAKER

THE HONORABLE

JUDGE MARK COVEN

**HEAD JUDGE OF THE
QUINCY COURT HOUSE**

THE SEDER PLATE

The Seder plate is the focal point of the proceedings on the first (two) night(s) of Passover. Whether it is an ornate silver dish or a humble napkin, it bears the ceremonial foods around which the Seder is based: matzah, the zeroa (shankbone), egg, bitter herbs, *charoset* paste and *karpas* vegetable.

Preparing these items requires some time. It is best to prepare all the Seder foods before the onset of the holiday, in order to avoid halachic questions.

The special foods we eat on Passover are also food for thought. Every item on the Seder plate abounds in meaning and allusion. Here you will learn the descriptions of each of the foods, the reason why it is included, the method of preparing it, and its role in the Seder meal.

Matzah

Three matzot are placed on top of each other on a plate or napkin, and then covered. (Some also have the custom to separate the matzot from each other with interleaved plates, napkins or the like.) We have three matzot, so that we can break one (as a slave would), and still have two whole matzot over which to recite the Hamotzi blessing (as required on Shabbat and holidays). The matzot are symbolic of the three groups of Jews: Priests, Levites and Israelites. They also commemorate the three measures of fine flour that Abraham told Sarah to bake into matzah when they were visited by the three angels ([Genesis 18:6](#)).

It is ideal to use handmade *shmurah* matzah, which has been zealously guarded against moisture from the moment of harvest.

On a cloth or plate placed above the three matzot, we place the following items:

The Zeroa (Shankbone)

A piece of roasted meat represents the lamb that was the special paschal sacrifice on the eve of the exodus from Egypt, and annually on the afternoon before Passover in the Holy Temple.

Some use a forearm of a lamb. Called the *zeroa*, it alludes to the verse which states, "I will redeem you with an outstretched arm (*zeroa*)."

Since we don't want to appear to offer the paschal sacrifice in the absence of the Holy Temple, others take care to use something that is relatively dissimilar to the actual offering. Accordingly, many communities have the custom to use a roasted chicken neck or the like.

Preparation: Roast the neck on all sides over an open fire on the stove. Afterwards, some have the custom to remove the majority of the meat of the neck (but not all of it).

Role in the Seder: The *zeroa* is not eaten at the Seder. After the meal it can be refrigerated, and used again on the Seder plate the following night.

Beitzah (Egg)

A hard-boiled egg represents the pre-holiday offering (*chagigah*) that was brought in the days of the Holy Temple. The meat of this animal constituted the main part of the Passover meal. The Aramaic word for "egg" is *bei'ah*, which is similar to the Aramaic word for "desire," expressing that this was the night when G-d desired to redeem us.

Preparation: Boil one egg per Seder plate, and possibly more for use during the meal.

Role in the Seder: Place one egg on the plate. As soon as the actual meal is about to begin, remove the egg from the Seder plate and use during the meal.

A popular custom is to eat these eggs together with the saltwater which was set on the table.

Maror and Chazeret (Bitter Herbs)

Bitter herbs (*maror*) remind us of the bitterness of the slavery of our forefathers in Egypt. Fresh grated horseradish, and romaine lettuce (or endives), are the most common choices.

The leaves of romaine lettuce are not bitter; but the stem, when left to grow in the ground, turns hard and bitter. So it was with our enslavement in Egypt. At first the deceitful approach of Pharaoh was soft and sensible, and the work was done voluntarily and even for pay. Gradually it evolved into forced and cruel labor.

Preparation: Peel the raw horseradish roots, rinse and dry well.

Next, grate the horseradish with a hand grater or food processor. (This must be done before the holiday begins.) Whoever will be grating the horseradish may begin to shed copious tears or cough a lot. Shielding the mouth and nose with a cloth may help. No beets or other condiments should be added to the horseradish.

Romaine lettuce is often very sandy. Wash each of the leaves separately, checking very carefully for insects. Take care that they do not soak for 24 hours. (Those who are particular not to eat matzah that becomes moist should pat the lettuce gently with a towel and let it sit until completely dry, so that there will be no moisture to come in contact with the matzah.)

Depending on how much romaine lettuce is needed, it can take several hours to prepare. This task should be completed before candle-lighting time on the first night. Prepare enough leaves for both nights, and store in the refrigerator.

Romaine is preferred over horseradish, and many have the custom to use both kinds together. Place a few cleaned, dried leaves of romaine lettuce on the Seder plate, topped with the horseradish. Since this will be used twice, it actually takes two spots on the Seder plate. The top pile (in the center of the plate) is called *maror* (bitter herbs), while the pile that sits beneath it is referred to as *chazeret* (lettuce).

Role in the Seder: After the recital of most of the Haggadah comes the ritual handwashing. Then matzah is eaten, followed by some *maror* (taken from the *maror* pile), followed in turn by a sandwich of matzah and *maror* (this time taken from the *chazeret* pile).

Charoset (Paste)

A mixture of apples, pears, nuts and wine, which resembles the mortar and brick made by the Jews when they toiled for Pharaoh.

Preparation: Shell nuts and peel apples and pears, and chop finely. Mix together and add a small amount of wine.

Role in the Seder: This is used as a type of relish, into which the *maror* is dipped (and then shaken off) before eating.

Karpas (Vegetable)

Many have the custom to use parsley, called *karpas* in Hebrew. This vegetable alludes to the backbreaking work of the Jews as slaves, as the Hebrew letters of *karpas* can be arranged to spell the word *perech* plus the letter *samech*. *Perech* means backbreaking work, and *samech* is numerically equivalent to 60, referring to 60 myriads, equaling 600,000, which was the number of Jewish males over 20 years of age who were enslaved in Egypt.

Preparation: Prepare your vegetable, an onion or (boiled) potato in many Eastern European traditions. Cut off a slice and place on Seder plate. On the table, next to the Seder plate, place a small bowl of saltwater.

Role in the Seder: After recital of *kiddush*, the family goes to the sink and ritually washes their hands, but without saying the usual blessing.

Everyone then takes a very small piece of the vegetable and dips it in saltwater. After the appropriate blessing is said, the *karpas* is eaten. Care should be taken that each person eats less than 17 grams (about ½ ounce).



THE FOUR QUESTIONS

The four questions demonstrate how our transition from slavery to freedom which is discussed in this paragraph is the reason for all the "strange" practices referenced in the questions. Each one of these practices is symbolic of our slavery, freedom, or both:

1) On all nights we need not dip even once, on this night we do so twice!

Slavery: The salt water into which we dip the [karpas](#) (potato, onion, or other vegetable) represents the tears we cried while in Egypt. Similarly, the [charoset](#) (fruit-nut paste) into which the bitter herbs are dipped reminds us of the cement we used to create the bricks in Egypt.

Freedom: Dipping food is considered a luxury; a sign of freedom -- as opposed to the poor (and enslaved) who eat "dry" and un-dipped foods.

2) On all nights we eat *chametz* or matzah, and on this night only matzah!

Slavery: Matzah was the bread of slaves and poor, it was cheap to produce and easy to make.

Freedom: Matzah also commemorates the fact that the bread did not have enough time to rise when the Jews hastily left Egypt.

3) On all nights we eat any kind of vegetables, and on this night maror!

Slavery: The [maror](#) (bitter herbs) reminds us of the bitterness of slavery in Egypt.

4) On all nights we eat sitting upright or reclining, and on this night we all recline!

Freedom: We commemorate our freedom by reclining on cushions like royalty.

Traditional Seder Plate and Table

- o Three Matzo's



A festive Seder Plate with traditional Passover foods

- o The Seder Plate
- o Roasted Shankbone
- o Roasted Egg
- o Bitter Herbs
- o Charoses
- o Parsley, Lettuce or Watercress
- o A wine goblet for each participant
- o Wine, or grape juice
- o A large goblet filled with wine at the center of the table ("Cup of Elijah")
- o A pillow or cushion placed on the left arm of the chair used by the Leader, or close to it
- o Dishes of Salt Water
- o Extra Bitter Herbs and Charoses

Passover Chocolate-Toffee Matzo

Feel free to riff on this recipe and use any toasted nut or topping you like—try swapping in puffed rice, pecans, or dried currants.

Ingredients

20 SERVINGS

- **4 sheets matzo (kosher for Passover)**
- **1½ cups (3 sticks) unsalted butter**
- **¾ cup sugar**
- **½ teaspoon Aleppo pepper, plus more (optional)**
- **1 cup chopped semisweet chocolate or chocolate chips (about 6 ounces)**
- **½ cup chopped shelled pistachios, toasted**
- **½ cup unsweetened coconut flakes, toasted**
- **Flaky sea salt (for serving)**
- **2 tablespoons cocoa nibs (optional)**

Preparation

Preheat oven to 350°. Line a large rimmed baking sheet with 2 sheets of parchment paper, overlapping and leaving some overhang on all sides. Arrange matzo in a single layer on prepared baking sheet, breaking to fit as needed to cover entire surface without gaps. Bring butter, sugar, 3 Tbsp. water, and ½ teaspoon Aleppo pepper, if using, to a boil in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally. Once boiling, stir once, then reduce heat to low and simmer, swirling pan occasionally, until mixture is golden brown and syrupy, 8–10 minutes.

Pour toffee evenly over matzo and spread to coat with an offset spatula. Bake until toffee is slightly darkened in color (the shade of a brown paper bag) and bubbling, 10–12 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool until toffee is firm but still hot, about 5 minutes. Sprinkle chocolate evenly over top and let sit until melted (chocolate will go from matte to shiny), about 5 minutes. Spread chocolate evenly to edges of matzo with offset spatula. Sprinkle with pistachios, coconut, salt and cocoa nibs and more Aleppo, if using. Let cool (or chill in the refrigerator if you simply can't wait) until chocolate has hardened. Break into pieces. Do Ahead: Matzo can be made 3 days ahead. Store airtight at room temperature.

Why Do We Count the Omer?

From the second night of Passover until the day before the holiday of Shavuot, the Jewish people age in a unique mitzvah called Sefirat HaOmer (counting of the Omer). The Torah commands us that during this time each year we count seven complete weeks, for a total of 49 days. At the end of the seven-week period we celebrate Shavuot, which means "weeks."

This is considered a mitzvah, so the count, which takes place each night, is preceded by a blessing. However, we may recite the blessing only if we have not missed a single day's counting. If we have omitted the counting even one night during that stretch (and did not make it up during the daytime without reciting the blessing), we may no longer recite the blessing, but instead must listen as a friend says the blessing and then do the counting.

During the times of the Holy Temple, at the beginning of the Omer count and on the following holiday of Shavuot, special grain offerings were brought. These offerings were waved in different directions, similar to how the *lulav* is waved during the holiday of Sukkot, to demonstrate G-d Almighty's all-encompassing presence.

Why do we count these days? We learn several reasons. The foremost is that the count demonstrates our thrill for the impending occasion of receiving the Torah, celebrated on Shavuot. Just as a child often counts the days until the end of school or an upcoming family vacation, we count the days to show our excitement at again receiving the Torah (as we do in fact receive the Torah in a renewed sense every year).

We also learn that this period is meant to spiritually prepare and refine ourselves. When the Jewish people were in Egypt nearly 3,400 years ago, they had assimilated many of the immoral ways of the Egyptian people. The Jews had sunk to an unprecedented level of spiritual defilement, and were on the brink of destruction. At the last possible moment, the children of Israel were miraculously redeemed.

They underwent a spiritual rebirth and quickly ascended to the holiest collective state they had ever reached. They were so holy, in fact, that they were compared to angels when they stood at the foot of Mt. Sinai to receive the Torah.

It was during that 49-day period that they underwent such a radical transformation. From the lowest lows to the highest heights in just seven weeks!

The commandments of the Torah are not meant merely as our history, but instead represent an ongoing life lesson for every Jew. We view the Torah as freshly received every day of our lives, and approach it and its commandments with appropriate vigor.

So too must we digest the lesson of the counting of the Omer. It is specifically during this time that we strive to grow and mature in our spiritual state. The Torah does not allow us to become satisfied with our current level of spirituality. Instead it tells us to set high goals for ourselves, and then methodically strive to reach that goal.

The growth that occurs during this time is akin to a marathon. We pace ourselves and seek to improve day by day until we reach the day that we again receive the Torah. In this process, we look deep within ourselves and work on all of our negative attributes. If we are challenged in the realm of acts of kindness, we go out of our way to do more charitable works. If we are lacking in the area of justice, we hold ourselves to the highest possible standards and are exacting and demanding in our personal behavior and habits. And so it goes for all of our traits.