



The Historic United Brothers Synagogue

205 High Street
Bristol, Rhode Island 02809

Religious Leader: Scott A. Tepper
Musical Director & Organist: Patrick Aiken

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401-253-3460
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NEWSLETTER

Adar II 5774
March 2014

Words from Michael Feldman: President

We were slaves...

Two blocks west of our synagogue is Bristol Harbor that, 80 years before the founding of United Brothers, was one of the most active ports participating in the slave trade in the United States. Although most Africans were brought to Southern slave markets, Northern ports, including Bristol, served as points of entry. Bristol served as one of the points of the triangular slave trade and our town flourished because of it.

Deuteronomy tells us the reason we celebrate Passover with the passage, “We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt...” and we must remember our liberation. Passover, to me, is not a holiday that only remembers events that occurred in the distant past over 3000 years ago. It is a holiday that celebrates freedom and liberation in all contexts.

The fact that we are located in a spot where, less than 200 years ago, slaves were imported and traded, illustrates the fight for basic human rights did not end with the Passover liberation but is a battle that needs to be continually fought.

We, as Jews and as members of a Jewish congregation must always be a force for freedom. Our history and tradition demands this. During our Seders, we should remember not only we were slaves, but others were slaves too. We should take time at our Seders to remember all oppressed people and we should not view oppression and slavery as some ancient concepts from 3,500 years ago. In Exodus, God said, “I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers and I am concerned about their suffering.” If someone was standing on the very grounds of our synagogue 200 years ago, they would most likely have heard the same cries.

Have a Zissen Pesach,

Michael

Reflections from Dr. Michael Sheff: Religious and Historical Editor

PESACH AGAIN

The full moon of spring is a time of gathering. For our nomadic ancestors, it was a time to gather the flocks and drive them to the summer pastures. A time to gather the first grain of the year, barley. A time to gather together the extended families and a time to gather the whole nation to perform the rituals of the Temple. A time to tell the foundation story of our people, the exodus from Egypt. For us it is a time to remember our heritage.

The book of Exodus begins with the history of how seventy members of Israel's family went down into Egypt. How they prospered there and how that prosperity led to them being hated and feared. They came as shepherds, a despised class in Egypt and escaped by miracles. A familiar tale in Jewish history with a familiar ending, emigration to avoid oppression. It is this story that we tell every year on the full moon of spring when we gather for the Pesach Seder. There is scant archeological or historical evidence for this epic. Exodus is filled with tantalizing references to known Egyptian practices. Children of the leaders of subject nations were adopted into upper-class Egyptian society as hostages. Was Moses such a figure? Ancient societies were subject to agricultural catastrophes and epidemics. Was there a folk memory of these as the source of the ten plagues? Nomads wandered – and still wander – the deserts looking for water. Is all of Exodus myth, without foundation, or is it legend, small truths enlarged to serve a greater religious and national purpose? Any library has a shelf full of books attempting to explain Moses, the exodus, and the origins of the Pesach as though the account in Exodus is a verifiable truth. It is all Indiana Jones literature.

What is true is that the unverifiable mystery of remembered miracles was taken to be proof of the existence of a Deity with a special relationship to a people. Not just to a king or pharaoh, but to each member of the tribe. The concept of a Holy People and the one God was the unique discovery that bound the nation together.

When family and friends gather to eat the Paschal feast we read the Haggadah to celebrate that discovery. We embroider the tale in Exodus and interweave it with ancient customs of hospitality and eating, Rabbinic discussions, and prayer. We accompany this annual retelling with wine and song to salute our freedom from bondage and make promises for the future. When we say l'shana habbah b'yerushaliym we may not mean it literally, but we do so to recognize that we are links in a very long chain.

Happy Pesach to everyone.

Hanukah Latke Festival:

The December Shabbat service was celebrated by a guest rabbinical student, Rebekah Goldman and preceded by the annual Latke Festival. Everyone contributed to a fabulous meal with latkes, salads and other delicious choices. Due to the growing popularity of this event, we were all glad to see Elaine Arbor arrive slightly late, like a Jewish calvary with a much needed extra platter of latkes! The festival continued as we waited for the arrival of Patrick to lead the musical accompaniment, so Michael Feldman declared that we should just serve dessert as well! More delicious selections were provided by congregants to top off a wonderful meal. Michael Sheff declared that it was, "A very Chekovian moment. The organist isn't here, so let's eat dessert!" The entire evening was capped off with a wonderful service and the beautiful singing voice and slight southern twang of our guest, Rebekah.



Recent Bar Mitzvah of Jake Wallack:

January 11th was a joyous day for the Wallack family and for United Brothers Synagogue, when Jake Wallack celebrated his Bar Mitzvah. Jake is the son of Anya Radar Wallack and Stanley Wallack. He was skillfully tutored by temple member Sandra Freedman. Congratulations to the entire Wallack family.



Jake Wallack



Jake, Sandra Freedman,
Anya Rader Wallack and Stan Wallack



Jake and his brothers Reuven and Seth

Book club:

Plan to join our book club this year!! It's a great time to spend talking and sharing thoughts about the literature that we read. Everyone is welcome. The next meeting is Thursday, April 3rd and the book selection is "The Obituary Writer" by Ann Hood. This is "A sophisticated and suspenseful novel about the poignant lives of two women living in different eras (Amazon)." The following meeting is Thursday, May 8th and the selection is, "The Book of Jonah" written by Faye and Michael Feldman's nephew, Joshua Max Feldman. This is Joshua's first book and is, "A major literary debut, an epic tale of love, failure, and unexpected faith set in New York, Amsterdam, and Las Vegas (Amazon)."

STAY TUNED FOR THE FOLLOWING EVENTS:

Saturday, March 22nd: Wine tasting event. Southern hemisphere kosher wines presented by Steve Krohn. This event is from 4-6PM at the temple and is \$15 per person for members and \$20 per person for non-members. Please RSVP to the temple email as soon as possible if you are interested in attending.

Tuesday, April 15: Second night Passover Seder. The Seder will be at 6:30 PM at the temple. More information will be sent out by email, but put the date on your calendar.

May: Annual Dinner. Stay tuned for more information.

GIFTS OF SHARING AND CARING

“One who donates much charity becomes the richer for it.”

UNITED BROTHERS GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES THE FOLLOWING SUPPORT

MEMORIAL FUND

Joan and Marvin Glickman in memory of Murray Stern and Donna Glickman
Stan and Anya Wallack in honor of Rose Wallack Asnes, Maxwell George Wallack
and Irene Dupont Wallack
Amy Hirsch in memory of Sally Roberts and Louis Roberts
Howard Kestenberg in memory of Milton Kestenberg
Bob and Amy Hirsch in memory of Lawrence S. Hirsch
Ronnee Wasserman in memory of Gertie Wax
Steve and Samantha Krohn in memory of Shirley Rich Krohn and Lewis M. Krohn
E. Sybil Simon in memory of Abraham Blackman and Norman Simon
Sharon and Bill Fermon in memory of Ida Benjamin Kraft
Herb Sackett in memory of Evelyn Sackett
Leonard and Goldie Cohen in memory of Felisa Nadine Cohen, Benjamin Cohen
and Dr. Charles Lattner Rose
Alan Hassenfeld in memory of Merrill L. Hassenfeld
Eleanor Radin in memory of Henry Turoff

GENERAL FUND

Dr. Jan and De Feldman
Andy Teitz in honor of Mike Feldman
Kenneth Chernack

Ina and Bernard Wasserman, Nancy S. Harris, Arthur and Barbara Sheer, Hershey and Myrna Rosen,
Herbert and Susan Triedman, Meredith and Dr. Walter Thayer in honor of Herb Sackett's special birthday.

MAZEL TOV TO

Stanley and Anya Rader Wallack on the Bar Mitzvah of their son Jake which was
celebrated in our beautiful United Brothers Synagogue.

WELCOME

A warm welcome to our newest members, Rosalyn and Ronald Guarnieri, Warwick, RI

GET WELL WISHES

To Larry Priest

THANK YOU – To the sponsors of our most recent Shabbat Onegs:

December – To our social committee for the wonderful “latke and dessert celebration”

January – To Sandra and Alexander Freedman

February – To Kevin and Joan Fandel

REMINDER

Our membership is the lifeblood of United Brothers. One of the greatest contributions you can make is to bring a
friend or relative to services and encourage their joining as a member.

HOPE TO SEE EVERYONE AT THE NEXT SHABBAT SERVICE ON MARCH 7TH AT 7:30PM