



# Nissan Newsletter

## Eshel Avraham Congregation

### A message from Rabbi Mauricio Balter



#### **Pesach and Responsibility**

We just finished celebrating Purim. We can still remember the laughs and the joy of our people celebrating the holiday. The masks, the wine, the noise characterize Purim; this holiday frees us from restrictions and formalities so we can celebrate our existence. We have survived once again!

Immediately after Purim, we start to prepare for Pesach. These two holidays both talk about us being saved from destruction, and yet we are talking about two completely different contents. As mentioned, in Purim we celebrate external and extreme happiness, masks, costumes, wine. In Pesach we talk about freedom to the deep. Pesach challenges us with the question: "freedom from what?", "what enslaves us?"

Pesach requires a deeper examination of our opinions regarding to freedom. I do not know many peoples who dedicate a week a year to examine freedom and the remnants from days of slavery.

The Halacha requires we check our house to find Chametz, which symbolizes the period we were under slavery. With every crumb we find we publicly declare that we have no intention to have any remain within us regarding those days.

Symbolically, sages have taught us to search for the chametz in our hearts. They compared the chametz crumbs leftover to the chametz in our hearts. What is chametz? they asked and answered: It is a substance that went under an oxidation process, a process that accurse after the water has been in contact with the flour for more than 18 minutes. From the 19th minute the flour becomes "Chametz". That is the border line between kosher and chametz- just a few seconds.

That is how the sages taught us to search for the chametz not only in our houses but also within us, in our hearts. The Hasidim claim that in the souring process the substance swells. That is why we need to take all of the chametz out of our hearts, especially that that swells our ego. When the ego swells up it takes up all the room in the soul and the heart and does not leave room for anything else. That cannot be called "kosher" – if I have only room for myself and not for any other.

The late Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach taught that even in our days, in a period of technological development where we have LED lamps, flashlights, lanterns in cell phones – we still have to use candles while checking for chametz because they are the ones who make it possible to reach every corner. With its' guidance, the simple candle naturally lights those corners that technology simply does not reach. Symbolically, that is how we should use the candle to light up the dark corners in our hearts.

If we look seriously, we can find and eradicate the chametz. The real way to freedom is in our hands.

I would like to wish you all a happy and free Pesach, may we all be free from everything and everyone that enslave us today.

Chag Sameach Ve'Kasher,

Rabbi Mauricio Balter



# A message from our president, Dr. Miriam Regev

The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle(dove) is heard in our land;

(Song of Songs, Chapter 2, verse 12).

Indeed spring is in the air, we are aware of it in the blossoming flowers, in their fragrance and all around us. After so many days of preparation, planning, cleaning, shopping and cooking, we arrive lively and joyful at the festive Seder table. No more despair and frustration; we are full of new expectations and hope.

According to Rabbi Yossi HaGlili: At the hour that the Jews ascended from the sea, they desired to utter a song. And how did they recite the song?

In this text from the Babylonian Talmud, we are told that the Shechinah appeared at the scene of splitting of the Red Sea and she was seen so clearly and was so inspiring that even the young children and the nursing infants stopped nursing in order to gaze upon her and they exclaimed: This is my God and I will glorify him'.

Rabbi Me'ir taught that at that time, even unborn children broke out in a song of praise because their mothers' wombs became transparent and they could see.

How this could have happened; how could they have seen the miracle that was taking place from their position inside the womb? Rabbi Tanchum responds to this question by saying that despite being hidden from the world, they were able to see because their mothers' stomachs became like *aspaklaria ha-me'ira* – transparent glass – which allowed them to look out. (Babylonian Talmud, Sotah 30, 31)

The term *aspaklaria* has its source in Latin as *specularis* or *speculare*, meaning “something transparent” or “a seeing glass” – from the same root as the word “spectacles.”

I wish that incomprehensible questions and all opaque and inexplicable things will become clear to us like the transparent glass and the most distinct and appropriate answers will be revealed to us.

I wish you all a happy Pesach.

Dr. Miriam Regev  
President



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# A message from our CEO, Mrs. Irit Arad

Pesach is here, and I wish us all a happy holiday, a holiday of blossom, of the fulfillment of all aspirations, but most of all a holiday where we can escape the slavery of our body and minds and receive true freedom.

The story of the exodus from Egypt has taken the concept of freedom and broadened it more than just historically. It is about freedom from thoughts, negative or judgmental feelings, ego, grudge, jealousy, bitterness and fear.

I wish us all the in the same way the Matza compared to the bread keeps its form, we will all keep the form of our soul so it does not swell or inflate according to no third party.

I wish we all became free to consolidate our personal opinion in any field and we will know not to impose it on others. Know that each person has their own inner believes and that we must respect those believes and enable every person to live their lives as they wish.

And always remember that good intent, love and care – that is quality of life, health and protection that is available for each and every one of us.

Chag Sameach.

Irit Arad, CEO



# Our activities...

## Chagim at Eshel Avraham

### Chanukkah Game Night!



On the eve of Tu B'Shvat and the day of, Masorti synagogue Kehillat Eshel Avraham, soup kitchen Be'er Sova, and environmental organization Earth's Promise partner for a social justice Tu B'Shvat with an emphasis on local sustainable food.



# Purim Megila reading and Purim Shpiel



## Community activities

### “KESHEV Program”

a series of four lectures revolving the different voices on Jewish life today.



Rabbinical pleader lawyer **Vardit Rozenblum**

Rabbi Dr. **Daniel Hartman**

Dr. **Ruth Calderon**

Rabbi Dr. **Sharon Shalom**



# Community activities

**"Pray the devil back to hell" screening with "woman wage peace" movement** - This documentary chronicles social unrest in the West African Republic of Liberia, where civil war has torn the nation apart and left hundreds of thousands dead or displaced. The film reconstructs the way this tragedy galvanized a coalition of Christian and Muslim women to rise up and, through nonviolent tactics, put pressure on their government to pursue peace talks. After the movie, we enjoyed a discussion led by Prof. Anat Keinan



**"Be'tzavta" Project in association with Adraba center** – joint Limud with members of the Masorati movement together with adults with disabilities.



**Hazan Yoel Kaplan visiting** – Hazan Yoel Kapln has arrived for his second visit to our congregation. While visiting he taught at Amirim Tali school and held a Shlichey Tzibur work shop at the congregation.



**Interfaith Dialog Project** – Interfaith Dialog Project led by religious leaders from the three religions – Islam, Christianity and Judaism. Our goal is to enter schools in the Negev and teach the values of tolerance and pluralism.



**Visits from Mesorati congregations** - Eshel Avraham congregation hosts delegations from the Mesorati movement from all over the world! In the photo: Delegation from Peninsula Sinai congregation from San Francisco with Rabbi Corey Helfand



**Rav Siach Project** – A program initiated by the Masorti Movement in Israel and the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs, designed to provide Conservative Masorti congregations worldwide and Masorti communities in Israel with a platform which would enable them to connect and form relationships between Israeli and Diaspora rabbis and their respective communities.





חג שמח!

"בְּכֹל דּוֹר וָדוֹר חִיב אָדָם לְרַאות אֶת עֵצְמוֹ כְּאִלּוּ הוּא יֵצֵא מִמִּצְרַיִם". התנועה המסורתית מאחלת לחבריה וחברותיה בכל רחבי הארץ, חג חירות ותקווה, חג בו נלמד ונשאל יחד "מה נשתנה" בעוד אנו מסובין לסדר עם יקירנו. חג שמח!

The 16th Southern Regional Woman's study Day - "To Be Spiritual, Ethical & Safe in a World of Chaos" was the topic of discussion. 120 woman from all over the Negev participated in a 4 languages (English, Hebrew, Spanish and Russian) fascinating study day!

***Eshel Avraham Congregation would like to wish all the community members, The Ganim Families and all of our friends and supporters around the world a happy and Kosher Pesach and a blooming spring holiday***

**We would like to thank all who took part in writing and editing the newsletter: Rabbi Mauricio Balter, Irit Arad, Miri Regev, Daphne Keren Lapidot, and to the translators: Yacov Lach, Bracha Yagil, Elizabeth Homans, Mauricio Acebrod**

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