

RLZ D'var Torah & Year in Review Congregational Meeting 2024

Looking Forward & Looking Back

This week's portion: Beha'alotcha – when you go up
Numbers 11:4-6

“The riffraff in their midst felt a gluttonous craving; and then the Israelites wept and said, “If only we had meat to eat! We remember the fish that we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. Now our gullets are shriveled. There is nothing at all! Nothing but this manna to look to!”

Next week in Shlach Lecha, the people are frightened about the next steps in their journey and they say: “Let us head back for Egypt.”

We, too, are on a journey. This is true of all of us at all times, but it is especially clear to us now, as a synagogue community. The comparison is certainly not parallel – the Israelites' romanticized past was one of slavery and oppression, which is not the case here!, but we are both moving forward into the unknown.

The Israelites cry: “There is nothing at all! Nothing but this manna to look to!”

The manna is no small thing. It apparently tasted good: like: **שֶׁמֶן הַשָּׁמַיִם**
- Rich cream, or cream of oil. Imagine schmaltz, maybe.

And we, what do we have?

Let's look at our work of this past year:

27 Holiday Celebrations and Observances

Including a new Tashlich Picnic

MLK Weekend: with Speaker Denice of Oyster Bay Historical Society

Day of Service: About 25 participants (most from the larger community) made and donated soup, mac and cheese, salad, muffins, and cookies to Helping Hands Rescue Mission

Purim – run by congregants

Passover – our largest community seder in recent years

Rosh Chodesh Groups

Weekly and Shabbat since last Congregational Meeting

85 Morning Gatherings

34 Shabbat Morning Services

30 Shabbat Morning Torah Studies

5 Soup Shabbats

2 Shabbat Luncheons

1 Shabbat meal at the Rabbi's

5 Meditation Services and 4 Meditation Walks

Pride Shabbat with our member Talia Aguirre and Dr. Eric Rubin-Perez (and please come on Friday to this year's!)

Also: 16 Shiva Minyanim (with gratitude)

Learning and Doing

Kids

80 sessions of Torah School (40 each for two students) – yes, there are still students. Save the Date for Jonathan Goldberg's bar mitzvah on Shabbat Bereshit, November 2!

Adults

Lunch & Learn

Daniel Gordis's Impossible Takes Longer, on Israel's aspirations for itself as articulated in its Declaration of Independence

Danya Ruttenberg's On Repentance, in preparation for the High Holidays

Michio Kaku's The God Equation, exploring the overlaps of theology and physics

Michael Strassfeld's Judaism Disrupted, on creating a relevant and meaningful Judaism for our time and the future

Native American Long Island

First Century Judaisms

Sharon Brous's The Amen Effect – on holding the joys and the sorrows and being there for each other through all of it.

Join us in August for Rabbi Shai Held's Judaism is about Love.

We went to the **Tenement Museum** in October!

With Temple Beth El, we co-sponsored the Cinema Arts Centre

screening of Rosenwald, about the Rosenwald Schools, founded by Julius Rosenwald to serve Black children in the south. A Committee on Racial Justice event.

We wrote 200 **postcards to get out the vote**

Israel Programs – 4 Israel Forums and 3 events with Israelis on their experiences since October 7 (thanks to the Israel Committee for these events)

Plus: 10 Bagels & Books (and join us on Sunday, June 30@2 for an extraordinary session with Bonnie Siegler and Helene Stapinski on their book: *The American Way*) **& 4 Movies & Munchies** (and join on June 26 for discussion of: "Keep the Change," a very special film).

Membership

2 households joined since September

Hosted three beautiful events: Welcome Back BBQ and Volunteer Appreciation and End-of-Year BBQ.

KSS Committees

Our committees continue to do great work. Current active committees with their chairs include:

Bagels & Books – Dolores Weinberg

Committee for Racial Justice – Roberta Israeloff

Fundraising Committee

House Committee – Cliff Broffman

Israel & Jewish Affairs Committee – Judy Davis

Liaison Committee – Audrey Teich

Membership Committee – Barbara Heller and Audrey Teich

Movies & Munchies – Lois Hass

Programming & Communications Committee – Scott Ash

Ritual Committee – Abby Pariser and David Schwartz

Security – Alan Wachtel

Strategic Planning

Pastoral Work

Hospital and Home visits, Funerals, Counseling

Rabbinic Discretionary Fund

Through your generosity, we have been able to support partnership programs with the larger community, individuals in need, special KSS events, and important upgrades to our technology and communications.

In the Community:

Jewish-Muslim Gatherings: Post-October 7: Holding Each Other's Hearts and May's Gathering at the home of Dr. Sara Siddiqui. Dr. Siddiqui and I spoke at Unity Day at WWHS.

Community Commemorations: Shabbat Gathering after October 7 & Yom HaShoah

Huntington Anti-Bias Task Force, Secretary

Suffolk County Human Rights Commission: I serve on the Administration of Justice Committee, which provides civilian oversight to complaints of misconduct of the SCPD.

Huntington Interfaith Council

Suffolk County Legislature – At the invitation of Rebecca Sanin, I offered the Invocation at their monthly meeting in March.

Reconstructing Judaism:

I serve on the **Board of Governors, the Executive Committee and the Affiliation Committee**, which will admit Congregation B'nai Israel of Vallejo, CA to the movement on Sunday.

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As you have seen, “nothing but this manna” is quite a bit.

More sacred gatherings, dynamic programming, meaningful community connections. Evolving, discovering, reconstructing into what comes next.

Many of the events of the past year were held by zoom, or in people’s homes. We have gathered in the building generally around 3 hours per week – plus a couple of extra times for holidays or meetings. The vitality of our congregation does not reside in our beloved 58 Goose Hill Road. It resides in the dynamism of our prayers, our learning, our celebrating, our engaging in conversation and acts of caring, in our working to repair the world, and in our deep connections with each other.

Let us journey forward together.