

March 2022 *Adar I/Adar II 5782*

Rabbi's Reflections

Purim, the Tabernacle, Esther, and Bette Midler



CONSTRUCTING

eply rooted. Boldly relevant.

JUDAISM

By Rabbi Lina Zerbarini

This is NOT Purim Torah*!

A question was brought, why do we read about the building of the Tabernacle in the month of Adar, when Purim falls? What does the Tabernacle have to do with Purim? And further, why is Hadassah called Esther? And why is Bette Midler referred to as "The Divine Miss M?"

Rabbi Lina opined:

This question has deep meaning. Purim and the Tabernacle are intimately connected. The Book of Esther takes place in the palace of the king. While you might think that the "palace of the king" is a metaphor for the Mishkan, it is not. It only points to it. In the palace of the king, the ruler summons his subjects. If they refuse to attend, they are banished, or worse. This may be seen in the story of Vashti, whom the king commanded to dance for him and for his other guests (although are you really a guest if you cannot leave?).

You might say, were not the Israelites commanded to bring offerings to the Tabernacle? If we look at the introduction to the building, we see that they are told: "all whose hearts so move them" should bring gifts. None were impressed into service. In fact, in the portion *Pikudei*, we read that "the people are bringing more than is needed…their efforts had been more than enough for all the tasks to be done." (*Exodus 36:7-8*)

kehillath Shalom

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זילת שלום



In addition, the king/palace provided lodging, food, and drink (especially drink) to the guests, but the Israelites provided everything to the Tabernacle. Therefore, we see that the Tabernacle is the converse of the palace. They are connected in that they are opposites.

Besides, the power in the Persian palace rests not with the king, who is easily manipulated by those around him, but in both of his queens, Vashti and Esther, who know their own minds and take

(Continued on page 2)

One link, One Meeting ID#, for моsт KSS meetings! Meeting ID#: 882 6522 6225 Password: 046 425 By Phone: 1 646 558 8656 or click this link:

https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/88265226225? pwd=MoZVcHlRWEZjeElod1VNajJ6UlNzUT09

Purim, the Tabernacle, Esther, and Bette Midler

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decisive action. This is why the Book is called Esther, and not Ahashverosh.

SO WHY IS HADASSAH CALLED ESTHER?

Hadassah is Esther's real name, as we are told in the Book that tells her story *(Esther 2:7)*. Esther is the name Hadassah is called outside of the Jewish community. If you would say that this is unusual, it is similar to Betty Joan Perske (Lauren Bacall), Issur Danielovich (Kirk Douglas), Bernice Frankel (Bea Arthur). But why did she choose the name Esther? Esther is a version of the name Ishtar, the goddess and lead divinity of the region.

Ishtar is also known as Astarte, and, when later adopted by Greeks and Romans, Aphrodite and

Venus. She is the goddess of love and fertility and sexuality. She was known as the Queen of Heaven throughout ancient Mesopotamia. Why would Hadassah choose this name, the name of a goddess, for her public name? This is another deep secret. And /יבין יבין



Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party* (Ishtar place setting)

Hamayveen yaveen/if you understand, you understand – if not, there's no explaining it to you.

WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH JEWS?

Ancient women worshipped Ishtar, baking small cakes in her image. There is archeological evidence found in Mari, a site in northwest Mesopotamia, where several clay molds in the image of a nude female figure were found. Israelite women did as well. How do we know this? Because the Bible tells us so!

"The children gather sticks, the fathers build the fire, and the mothers knead dough, to make cakes for the Queen of Heaven" (*Jeremiah* 7:18) and, lest you deem this an insult by a disapproving prophet, the Israelite women speak in their own words: "We will fulfill the vows which we made, to burn incense to the Queen of Heaven and to pour libations to her" (*Jeremiah* 44:17) and, if you think it was only the women who worshipped the Queen of Heaven, they say: "Do you suppose that we were burning incense and pouring out liquid offering to the queen of heaven, and making cakes marked with her image, without our husbands

knowing it and helping us? Of course not!" (*Jeremiah 44:19*).

Therefore, Esther is Ishtar, Goddess of Love and Hadassah means Myrtle: our heroine is Fertile Myrtle! And the cakes that we still bake for her holiday, that are called Hamantaschen, are Queen of Heaven cakes. They were not always called Hamantaschen – Haman's Hats or Ears or whatever you think belongs to Haman. They were, are, and have always been *mahn taschen*, poppyseed pockets. Triangular cakes filled with life-giving seeds. Calling them Hamantaschen is a ruse to disguise the reality that we are eating cookies that represent the womb of the world. These are Esther's cookies, not Haman's!

AND HOW IS ANY OF THIS RELATED TO THE DIVINE MISS M?

Bette Midler sings <u>Come on a-My House</u> (as have others, but she did so for a reason). Here are the words, if by some chance you do not remember them:

Come on-a my house, my house, I'm gonna give you candy

Come on-a my house, my house, I'm gonna give a you

Apple a plum and apricot-a too eh

Come on-a my house, my house a come on Come on-a my house, my house a come on Come on-a my house, my house I'm gonna give a you

Come on-a my house, my house a come on Come on-a my house, my house a come on

Come on-a my house, my house, I'm gonna give you candy

Come on-a my house, my house, I'm gonna give you everything,..... everything, everything.

You might think that this song is about a woman enticing a lover. It is not. The singer is the *Shechinah*, also known as the Queen of Heaven. The House is the Tabernacle. It is also your heart (Build Me a Tabernacle and I will dwell within them – *Exodus 25:8*). She sings to each of us: Come to My House (the caps are not stylistic) and I will give you everything. Everything! Everything!

The Zohar (of course!) connects this when it teaches: רחמנא ליבא בעי/*Rachmanah liba ba-ei*: The Womb of the World desires the Heart. When we eat womb cookies, we symbolize giving Her our hearts.

(Continued on page 3)

From the Presidents The Lion and the Lamb

by Beverly Mannix

March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb. It seems like that is true this year but the lion is the past surge in the Omicron variant. By now we probably all know somebody who has been diagnosed with Covid and at one time or another most of us have probably been exposed to or have come in contact with someone with Covid. We are very cautious at Kehillath Shalom Synagogue and are continuing to have our Friday candle lighting by Zoom. As March approaches, we are resuming inperson programs at Kehillath Shalom, as well as offering our Shabbat services and other events in a hybrid format for those who prefer Zooming.

It is my hope that March will go out like a lamb with Omicron behind us or at least slowing down. It has been a very long winter and I am sure we are all hoping for a spring where we can really see our friends in person, not just in those little boxes on our computer monitors. With spring comes renewed hope, added light, and warmth. Spring allows us to spend more time outdoors, work on our gardens, take long walks, and enjoy longer days. These positive activities can give us hope and lift our spirits. To quote English moral philosopher Bernard Williams, on his reflections about hope and spring, "The day the Lord created hope was probably the same day he created spring." �



The Gifts Received

GENERAL FUND

Bev Mannix, in memory of Hilda Sternberg, mother of Judy Avidor

LOIS HASS, in memory of HILDA STERNBERG, mother of JUDY AVIDOR

BARBARA HELLER, in memory of HILDA STERN-BERG, mother of JUDY AVIDOR

VICKI & DAVID SCHWARTZ, in memory of HILDA STERNBERG, mother of JUDY AVIDOR

AUDREY TEICH & MINDY ISACOFF, in memory of HILDA STERNBERG, mother of JUDY AVI-DOR

ALAN & INEZ WACHTEL, for snow removal

PRAYER BOOKS

JANET LONDON & GERRY KREINCES, in memory of HILDA STERNBERG, mother of JUDY AVIDOR

ADULT ED

LAWRENCE SOKOL

Remember to use Amazon Smile and make sure Kehillath Shalom is your designated charity when shopping on Amazon! ❖

Purim, the Tabernacle, Esther, and Bette Midler

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BUT WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH BETTE MIDLER?

She sings the song and represents the *Shechinah*. And if you did not understand before that the words were being said by the *Shechinah*, she called herself The **Divine** Miss M. And if you still did not understand, she spends her time <u>building</u> gardens in New York.

The Divine Miss M teaches us that the *Shechinah* calls us back to our Source, to the original Garden, where we could eat the fruits together and give each other our hearts and everything.

*Purim Torah is a tradition of humorous and satirical comments disguised as Talmudic or legal discourse. It parodies Torah discussion and is offered in the month of Adar (this year, Adar II), in celebration of Purim. Often, it works to "prove" the opposite of what you'd expect, like "water isn't kosher." While this column is written in traditional style and, while it is Adar, I am perfectly, completely, one hundred percent serious. �



WHO KNEW ? WOULD YOU?

Trivia Night Fundraiser Asked the Questions

Teddy Roosevelt. Craig Biggio. The Flanders Duck. Roosevelt Field.

These were some of the answers, but would you have been able to pair them with the correct questions?

On Thursday, February 10, fourteen teams of congregants faced off to test their knowledge of Long Island. The teams ranged from one to three people, and, over Zoom, they battled to see who would come out on top. Over the course of an hour and a half, each team tackled a gauntlet of fifteen questions per game generated by our Quiz Master, Alan Wachtel.

In Game One, Barbara and Zach of Team Feder-Murdock edged out a slim victory and took home a prize of Bushnell binoculars. In Game Two, Liz and Ron of Team Sabo correctly answered an amazing thirteen out of fifteen questions and chose an electric kettle from the prize assortment.



It was all in good fun. We laughed with each other and at ourselves as we found out the shape of Long Island lore deficits. The evening was a success financially as well. The event brought in \$657 to support Kehillath Shalom.

There are still more questions to answer and more prizes to win, so look for the announcement of Return of KSS Trivia Night!

Scott Ash

COMMITTEES AND CONTACTS

	01111010		
Membership	Barbara Heller	<u>bjhdmt@aol.com</u>	
RITUAL	David Schwartz	<u>sailrman@optonline.net</u>	
	Abby Pariser	<u>abbyparis@aol.com</u>	
Fundraising	Abby Pariser	<u>abbyparis@aol.com</u>	
	Scott Ash	ashs3@verizon.net	
ISRAEL CONNECTIONS			
& Jewish Affairs	Judy Davis	JDavis4727@aol.com	
House	Cliff Broffman	<u>cliffbroffman@gmail.com</u>	
SECURITY	Alan Wachtel	<u>alanwac1@gmail.com</u>	
CARING COMMUNITY	Audrey Teich	<u>aktcsw@aol.com</u>	
Torah School	Jen Sturza	jdsturza@optonline.net	
COMMUNICATIONS	Scott Ash	ashs3@verizon.net	
RACIAL JUSTICE	Roberta Israeloff	<u>rsis@optonline.net</u>	
SUBCOMMITTEE OF SOCIAL ACTIC	N		

If you would like to know more about a particular committee — what it does, how much time it entails, or anything else — please contact the people above. Asking for more information does not commit you to anything! But it could lead to a rewarding experience, working with others to strengthen and grow our community. �

Through a Reconstructionist Lens: Economic Justice



March 13@10 am

The Committee for Racial Justice (CRJ) has an exciting program planned for this month. On Sunday morning, **March 13, from 10 am to noon**, we will gather virtually to watch *Through a Reconstructionist Lens: Economic Justice*. In this riveting 45-minute video, Rabbi Mordechai Liebling leads a discussion about *shmita* and Reconstructionism. He speaks with Rabbi Michael Pollack, a Philadelphia rabbi and nonviolent activist who organized the "March on Harrisburg" to protest corruption in government.

The video also features Mark Pinsky, who will join us virtually Sunday morning after the video to answer questions. Mark, a believer and expert in community development financial institutions, (CDFIs), has advised US presidents, as well as the Federal Reserve Board of Governors, and regularly consults with major financial institutions. His take on economic justice and its overlap with the values animating Reconstructionism are illuminating.

Rabbi Liebling, Former Director of the Social Justice Organizing Program and Instructor Emeritus of Practical Rabbinics at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, directs the newly created Social Justice Organizing Program at RRC. He has worked throughout his career toward *tikkun olam*.

Please join us.





Celebrate the holiday with crafts, silly service, Megillah reading, songs, a spiel led by our children, and, of course, hamantaschen for all.

Kehillath Shalom Synagogue Soulful Shabbat

Meditative Walk at Target Rock National Wildlife Refuge

3.19.22@10am

SHABBAT SERVICES

FRIDAY, MARCH 4

Soup Shabbat 6:30 pm

SATURDAY, MARCH 5 Torah Study 10 am

Tefilah 11:15 am

Torah School Workshop

Torah Portion: <u>Pekudei</u>, Exodus <u>38:21</u> -40:38

The conclusion of the construction, with details of the amount of gold and copper used, and detailed descriptions of the priestly vestments made for Aaron and his sons. A cloud covers the Tabernacle with the "Presence of Adonai."

FRIDAY, MARCH 11

Candlelighting on Zoom 6:30 pm

SATURDAY, MARCH 12

Torah Study 10 am

Tefilah 11:15 am

Torah Portion: Vayikra, Leviticus

<u>1:1-5:26</u>

Rules and procedures for sacrifices are described in great detail. Rules are spelled out for priests, for the community as a whole, and for individuals.

FRIDAY, MARCH 18 Kabbalat Shabbat 6:30 pm

SATURDAY, MARCH 19

Meditation Walk at Target Rock NWR 10 am



Torah Portion: <u>*Tzav*</u>, <u>Leviticus 6:1–8:36</u> God explains to Moses burnt offerings, meal offerings, sin offerings, guilt offerings, offering of ordination, and the sacrifice of well being. The Israelites are commanded to bring the offerings to the priests. God instructs Moses on how to ordain Aaron and his sons into the priesthood.

Friday, March 25 Candlelighting on Zoom 6:30 pm Saturday, March 26

Tefilah 10 am

Israel Forum 11:15 am

Torah Portion: <u>Shemini</u>, Leviticus 9:1—11:47 Moses tells Aaron of God's requirements for sin offerings. Two of Aaron's sons are destroyed because they didn't follow God's instructions. The rules of kashruth are described. *****



Zoom Quick Reference Schedule

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
Morning Gathering		8 am			8 am	
Torah Study & Tefilah						10 am
Candlelighting					6:30 pm	
Lunch & Learn				12:30 pm		

Zoom Meeting ID for most events 882 6522 6225, Password 046 425

bagels & books

Our February discussion of Mimi Lemay's *What We Will Become* was lively, informative, and interesting. Lemay's account of her and her son's journeys to their true selves, told in alternating chapters, provided the basis for a discussion focused, for the most part, on evolving understanding of gender and sexuality, but also touching on mother-daughter relationships and the world of the ultra-Orthodox. There was unanimous agreement that this was an excellent choice.

In our March 20 selection, Kristin Harmel's *The Book of Lost Names*, which was inspired by an astonishing true story from WWII, a young woman with a talent for forgery helps hundreds of Jewish children flee the Nazis. *People* magazine called it "a heart-stopping tale of survival and heroism."



For the rest of the year:

April 24 — *The Last Kings*

of Shanghai: The Rival Jewish Dynasties that Helped Create Modern China, by Jonathan Kaufman

May 22 — *The Hidden Palace: A Novel of the Golem and the Jinni,* by Helene Wecker

June 26 — Concealed: Memoir of a Jewish-Iranian Daughter Caught Between the Chador and America, by Esther Amini

Until further notice, we will continue Zooming on Barbara Kremen's account at 10 am Sundays. Bring your own bagel, lox, and coffee, or whatever Sunday morning treat you'd like and please join us for any books that interest you. RSVP to Barbara, <u>bskhere@yahoo.com</u>.



Rabbi	Lina Zerbarini/203-915-4786
	rabbi@kehillathshalomsynagogue.org
Co-Presidents	Beverly Mannix/631-806-5124
	beverlycmannix@gmail.com
	Gail Sachs/516-508-1978
	GailatKSS@gmail.com
Vice-Presidents	Judy Avidor/516-449-8521
	javidorkss@gmail.com
	Alan Wachtel/631-897-5638
	<u>alanwac1@gmail.com</u>
Treasurer	lleen Koenig/631-757-9602
	koenigi631@gmail.com
Financial Secretary	Barbara Heller/516-671-9571
	<u>BJHDMT@aol.com</u>
Recording Secretary	Jennifer Sturza/516-384-4918
	jdsturza@optonline.net
Corresponding Secretary	Carole Valente/576-938-3833
	holycanoli@optonline.net
<i>Newsletter</i> Editor	Arlene Fell/631-423-3370
	fell31@yahoo.com
Caring Community	Barbara Malleck/631-421-3268
	Audrey Teich/ <u>aktcsw@aol.com</u>
Office Secretary	Pam Fosella/631-367-4589
	<u>out.n.about@juno.com</u>

Published by Kehillath Shalom Synagogue 58 Goose Hill Road, Cold Spring Harbor NY 11724 Office 631-367-4589 Fax 631-367-3167 kehillathshalom@optonline.net http://www.kehillathshalomsynagogue.org

LOOKING FOR A NEW OIL COMPANY?

Skaggs-Walsh, KSS' heating oil supplier, gives us cash thank-yous if you sign up with them and say Kehillath Shalom Synagogue referred you. Our first two referrals, ABBY PARISER and PETER GOLLON, and JANE

KÜNSTLER and CLIFF BROFFMAN, earned us \$100 each. The third referral is worth \$200! Will you



be the one? Referrals #4 and 5 would also earn us \$100 each, and #6 would be another \$200, and so on.

Contact Skaggs-Walsh at 516-227-3700, or skaggswalsh.com. ❖



The views expressed in by-lined Newsletter articles represent the views of the writers and may not reflect those of the entire Kehillath Shalom Synagogue community.

We welcome the free expression of ideas from different perspectives and will consider all submissions for publication.

A Religion? An Ethnicity? A People.

by Judy Davis

Many people seem to hold strong opinions about Jews without really knowing much about them, including Jews themselves. Long before Whoopi Goldberg, (we'll return to her later), I could see that there is a lot of confusion about us – the Jews.

My more recent thinking about this began with a question: If you had to choose an artifact to represent the ancient Jewish people, what would you choose?

The question arose when I noticed a photograph in the quarterly Huntington Arts Council Newsletter. Labeled *New Discovery Chest, Middle East*, it showed the contents of the chest arrayed on a table: children's books, a small woven rug, a drum, articles of clothing from the region like a hijab and a yarmulke (skullcap), and other items I couldn't discern.

The accompanying text explained that this Discovery Chest contained artifacts of various ancient Middle Eastern civilizations-- Babylonians, Persians, or Hebrews, for example. It is lent to schools as an enrichment tool and used to teach children how artifacts can provide insights into lives of early peoples.

What artifacts were used to represent ancient Hebrews? In an email, the educational coordinator informed me, "...we actually have two. The dreidel game is included in the games section and then the yarmulke. Some Jewish traditions are mentioned in the food section." Hmm. Bagels?

Here on Long Island, most

people have Jewish classmates, friends, and neighbors. If ancient Hebrews, forebears of today's Jews, can be represented by items as insignificant as a dreidel and a yarmulke, what do people think and know about Jews?

"The best thing you could put in your Middle East Chest to represent ancient Hebrews," I suggested to the educational coordinator, "would be the Bible/Old Testament..." I explained that the Bible, in part, tells the story of the Hebrews, Israelites, who are the ancestors of today's Jews. Known to Christians as the "Old Testament," the Jewish Bible is foundational to both Christianity and Islam. (Judaism, Christianity and Islam together are referred to as the three Abrahamic religions.) resent us with "artifacts" that were not even in use in ancient times. Whether we are seen as trivial dreidel spinners or would-be masters of the universe, powerful manipulators conniving to replace native white Americans, oppressors and swindlers of poor people of color, research demonstrates that, "Jews are victims of more hate crimes per capita than all

In fact, the Bible is probably the most mean-

ingful influence the Jewish people have had upon the world. America's Founders knew the Old Tes-

tament well and its essential concept - that all hu-

fore equal – was codified in our Declaration of In-

City suburb, composed of educated, sophisticated,

dependence. Yet, the Arts Council in a New York

artistic leaders – many of whom are Jews – rep-

man beings are made in God's image and there-

other groups in the United States...However, anti-Jewish hate crimes receive disproportionately little news coverage, by a disturbingly large margin."¹ (They don't know us, but they do hate us!)

Let's return to Whoopi Goldberg's notorious comments. She characterized the Holocaust, accurately and somewhat sympathetically, as an in-

stance of "man's inhumanity to man" but inaccurately as "not about race." She reasoned that both Jews and Nazis were, in her opinion, "white." The Nazis, however, defined Jews as an "inferior race." But Whoopi Goldberg didn't know that. She also didn't know that Jews are multiracial, not white.

Hanlon's razor says one should

"never attribute to malice that which is adequately explained by stupidity." I would add, "or to ignorance." I don't think Whoopi Goldberg meant to be malicious, but I do think she was ignorant. As ignorant as one of my Jewish friends who said, "I thought we were a religion."

Whoopi Goldberg's comments give Jews an opportunity to ponder important questions: Who is a Jew? What does it mean to be Jewish? A religion, a race, an ethnicity? Perhaps the answer is *Am Yisrael*, the people of Israel, whose tale is described in our most significant "artifact," the Bible.



¹<u>HonestReporting Research Study: Comparing US Me-</u> <u>dia Coverage of Hate Crimes Against Minorities, Including</u> <u>Jews | Honest Reporting</u>

Lunch & Learn Shmita: To Create a Just Society

This year, 5782, is a *shmita* year, a biblical practice in which the land was to lie fallow every seven years, and in the seventh cycle, to be reorganized into its original familial distribution.

We will look at traditional texts and their implications for own approaches to wealth, property, productivity, rest, release, freedom, and the environment.

Thursdays, 12:30—2 pm on Zoom.



When Governor Cuomo was forced out of office due to his interactions with female staff, public reaction seemed to fall across generational lines. Some older women seemed to say: "you're young, you're attractive, get over it," while younger women's responses seemed to be: "just because women have been dealing with this for centuries doesn't mean we need to do so!" Does this reflect the split between Vashti and Esther? Join us to welcome Adar II, connect with community, discuss the above, plus: a creative project. <u>RSVP</u> for location.



The War of Return: How Western Indulgence of the Palestinian Dream Has Obstructed the Path to Peace, by Adi Schwartz and Einat Wilf

Joint Session of Bagels & Books and The Israel Forum

SUNDAY, October 17 / 10 am

Update and Report from Israel and the Middle East

Saturday, November 13 / Services at 10 am, Forum at 11:15

Analysis of the Threats and Challenges Faced by Israel

Saturday, December 11 / Services at 10 am, Forum at 11:15

Israel and the Middle East: What American Media Don't Tell You

Saturday, February 12 / Services at 10 am, Forum at 11:15

Update and Report from Israel and the Middle East Saturday, March 26 / Services at 10 am, Forum at 11:15

Moderated by Kehillath Shalom member Nissim Yeheskel, Israeli native and frequent visitor.



Friday evenings, 6:30

(When nothing else is scheduled) We'll share, sing, and bring Shabbat peace. Join Zoom Meeting by computer: https://zoom.us/ j/88265226225 Or Phone: +1 646 558 8656 Meeting ID: 882 6522 6225, Password 046 425

We will learn, study, share, pray. As usual, come for Torah Study or Service or Both! Join Zoom Meeting by computer: <u>https://zoom.us/j/88265226225</u> Or phone: +1646 558 8656 Meeting ID: 882 6522 6225, Password 046 425

Kehillath Shalom Synagogue

Shabbat Morning Torah Study 10 am Service 11:15 am



Morning Gathering: Tuesday & Friday Mornings at 8 am Establish a strong, centered, calm foundation for the day. Join Zoom Meeting by computer <u>https://zoom.us/j/788752335</u> or by phone: 1 646 558 8656 US (New York) Meeting ID: 882 6522 6225, Password 046 425



March 2022 Rdar 1/Rdar 2 5782



