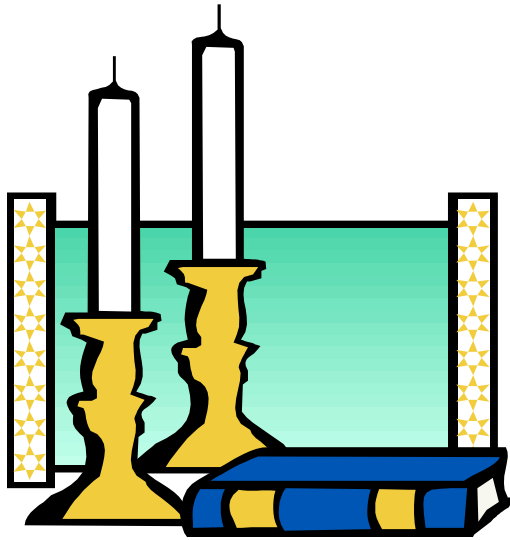


THE TEMPLE ISRAEL NEWS

ATHOL, MASSACHUSETTS VOL. 23 ADAR 5765 MARCH, 2005



RABBI'S THOUGHTS

Dear Friends:

The disaster in South Asia weighs heavy on my mind these days. Pictures of houses destroyed and rubble, cars overturned, lifeless bodies ... 250,000 people dead and others missing. My faith in an all-loving, compassionate God was shaken by this event. I am sure your faith was too. Our tradition ultimately tells us not to despair of God's sovereignty in the world, but to work to bring God presence into the world by sending help, being charitable, and rebuilding lives. Thank God we are doing just that. I know many of you have sent donations to the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and to the Red Cross. Our Federation in Springfield raised over \$160,000 last month. Our own Joe Kurland and Peggy Davis were part of a Tsunami Disaster Relief Concert in Greenfield last week. There is much more to do and we need to be mindful that South Asia needs our attention this year.

Still, the question of how God can allow such suffering has not been answered. In the story from the Torah after the miracle of the Red Sea, we read that Moses was overwhelmed by number of people who came to him *lidrosh elohim* – literally

“to search out God.” Although most commentaries understand this to mean that the people brought their legal cases to Moses, one commentator, Malbim, says that they were “investigating matters of the divine.” Rabbi

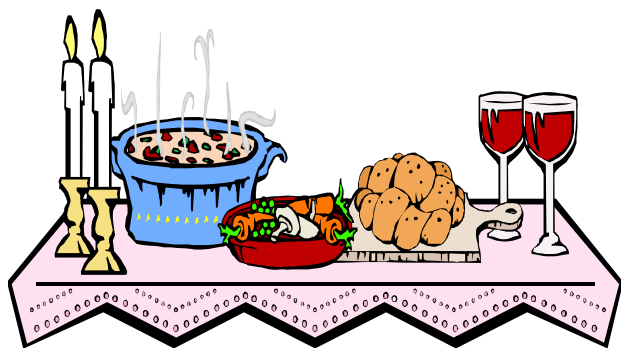
Lawrence Hoffman assumes that many of the newly-freed slaves had questions about what they witnessed at the Red Sea. They must have wondered, “What kind of God split the sea for us, but drowned an entire Egyptian army of mostly ignorant and innocent husbands and fathers? Why couldn't God rescue us without massacring the Egyptians?” It is a good Jewish question.

So what is the reason that thousands of innocents had to die in Asia? Muslims say that everything happens according to God's will; the word “Islam” means “submission.” Christianity has traditionally emphasized the ubiquity of human sin; death is inevitable and fitting whenever it arrives. The important thing is to repent. Hindus and Buddhists look to karma as the causative factor; what happens in this life will have impact on what we do in the next. Karma is neither evil nor good. There are Jewish texts that reflect some of these ideas, but overall we Jews hold God accountable for what happens in the world. It started with our father Abraham and it continues with Elie Wiesel until this day. We worry about God's reputation in this world and that is why we have to work hard to restore the social order. Many things remain unexplained (as to why tectonic plates shift without warning), but that doesn't mean we give up belief. Confusion that leads to despair that leads to atheism leads to indifference. It weakens the age-old covenant that our ancestors bequeathed to us: never give up on God. Life tests us. We may not have the answers, but we still hold the right to “investigate matters of the divine.” There is no resignation in being a Jew.

Jon Perlman

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Shabbaton Adar March 4-5, 2005

SHABBAT ACROSS AMERICA!

On March 4, tens of thousands of Jews across America will come together to eat, drink, relax, enjoy, and celebrate the 9th annual Shabbat Across America!

Hundreds of synagogues across the continent—including Temple Israel here in Athol—will take part in an historic national Jewish event to celebrate what unifies all Jews: Shabbat! And everyone is invited...singles, couples, families—all ages. So bring your neighbors, your friends, your co-workers—and let's celebrate, together! For more information, please contact Rabbi Perlman at the telephone numbers listed on the last page of this newsletter, or call 1-888-SHABBAT or 646-871-4444. The program is sponsored by the National Jewish Outreach Program in New York (www.njop.org)

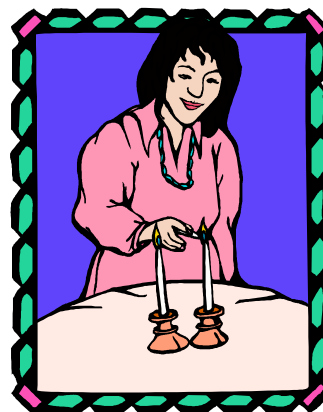
Note from Mitch: If you can bring along one friend this Friday evening—someone who has not been to Temple Israel in a while—it would make the evening really special! Thank you!

Friday night, March 4th

6:00 PM Vegetarian/Dairy Pot Luck Dinner
7:00 PM Kabbalat Shabbat Services
Special Speaker for Shabbat

Saturday morning, March 5th

9:15 AM Meditation
10:00 AM Schacharit Services
10:30 AM Children's Program
12:00 PM Cholent Lunch followed by discussion
5:00 PM Sunset Torah Discussion with Children
6:00 PM Poetry/Havdalah



CANDLE-LIGHTING TIMES FOR ATHOL, MA

25 Feb	5:15
4 Mar	5:23
11 Mar	5:32
18 Mar	5:40
25 Mar	5:48

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1 Apr 5:56
8 Apr 7:04
15 Apr 7:12
22 Apr 7:20
29 Apr 7:28



Thursday, March 24th Purim Carnival and Megillah Reading

Purim is a fun holiday for all ages. We celebrate the “reversal of fortune” that happened to the Jewish people over two thousand years ago in the land of Persia. Haman the wicked wanted to destroy all the Jewish people but Mordecai and Esther defeated his plans and declared the annual celebration of Purim that continues to this day.

We will have family activities followed by dinner and a wild-and-wacky Megillah reading (The Book of Esther) with the rabbi. All ages are required to come in costume!

4:00 PM Family Activities

Starring Janice Colbert, Family Educator
Lara Temkin-Pisani and Rabbi Jon Perlman

- Make Your Own Gragger
- Make and Bake Hamantaschen
- Prepare Mishloach Manot (Goodie Bags) for your friends

5:30 PM Dinner

6:00 PM Megillah Reading (Program will end at 7:00 PM).



See Jewish New York with Rabbi Perlman

Sunday, April 10th

6:30 AM - 10:00 PM

We will meet at Temple Israel in Athol.

See historic synagogues, the lower east side, and old Harlem with tour guides and an American Jewish historian from Yeshiva University.



Full price includes meals: \$125 per person

For more information, call Rabbi Perlman at 413-739-4715

**Supported by the
Harold Grinspoon Foundation**

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PLEASE LEND US A HAND!

PLEASE JOIN TEMPLE ISRAEL'S

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN--AN AMBITIOUS
AND IMPORTANT PLAN TO RAISE \$100,000 FOR
CAPITAL EXPENDITURES FOR OUR TEMPLE!

To make a separate Capital Campaign donation for the
building, please send a check to

**Temple Israel c/o David Koester
245 Gale Road Warwick, MA 01378.**

Thank you, in advance, for your generosity!



REMINDERS...THIS MONTH

March 4-5 Shabbaton

March 24 Purim

AND COMING UP...

April 1 and 2 Shabbaton

April 10 New York Trip with Rabbi

April 23 First Night of Passover

May 4—Yom HaShoah

There's so much happening these days at Temple Israel -- for adults, for families, for children! Please visit with us, and see what all the excitement is about! We'd love to see you!

For more information, please call Temple Israel in Athol at 978-249-9481. Our new voice mailboxes are now in operation. You may also directly contact President Dr. Myron Maron at 978-724-0238 or Rabbi Jonathan Perlman at 414-736-1033 (home) or 413-739-4715 (work) Ask for Rabbi Perlman.