

Purim — a time to eat, drink, and be merry

BY PATTI RUBIN

If a passerby were to look through the windows of a Jewish Center during Purim festivities, they would see people of all ages in masks and costumes, whirling noisemakers, stomping their feet, and shouting so loudly the windows would shutter. And then, their eyes would fall on the table spread with triangular cookies called hamentaschen, as seen in the picture below, and spirited beverages. Jewish Mardi Gras? Not exactly, but close: Purim!

Purim, like Chanukah, is considered a minor holiday in the Jewish calendar, in contrast to the pilgrimage festivals of Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot. Like Chanukah, Purim celebrates the deliverance of the Jewish people from an evil man determined to destroy them. Minor, Schminor, Purim is about fun!

The story of Purim is told in the biblical Book of Esther. It reads like a historical novel. And as in any good novel, the main characters are strong, believable, and have flaws that draw the reader in.

The Purim story is set in ancient Persia, approximately 900 years after the Exodus from Egypt. On the side of good is young, beautiful Esther. She is taken to King Ahasuerus. He chooses Esther not only as the latest addition



Above: The only quiet moment of the Purim service is captured here, as the multi-generational crowd prepares for the joviality and merriment that is about to fill the sanctuary. Above right: Wendy Jacobson delights in grand Purim guise. Photos by Larry Dunn.



to his harem, but because he loves her more than any other woman. She becomes Queen Esther.

Her uncle, Mordechai, who has raised her as his daughter, is also on the side of good and is not a fan of Haman, the anti-semitic “prime minister” of the Persian Empire. After Mordechai refuses to bow to him, Haman immediately begins a plot to destroy the Jewish people. Tensions rise after Mordechai persuades Esther to speak to the king to request a reversal of the plot. After much cheese and wine, and Esther’s orchestrated request, the king halts the plot, and in the end, Haman and

his ten sons are hanged in “Shu Shu Shushan.”

Esther and Mordechai recorded the events for future generations in a document called the Megillat Esther — literally, the Scroll of Esther. The Megillah is read publicly as part of the Purim festivities. The dictates of this festival are effortless. First, we are commanded to listen to the reading of the Megillah.

Secondly, and a crowd favorite, is to “eat, drink, and be merry.” It is often written as a reminder that a person should drink until the difference between “cursed be Haman” and “blessed be Mordechai” cannot be distinguished. Or, they party like it was 3408.

During Purim, we celebrate how everything can turn upside-down and into something else, and nothing is exactly what it appears to be.

Save the date for the Purim festivities at JCOGS on Saturday, March 15. Eat dinner prior to arrival, but save room for hamentaschen and other sweets, and of course, the spirited beverages. Remember to come in costume or mask — or both! Graggers (noisemakers) will be provided.

And don’t forget to bring a couple of items for our Food Share receptacle. In doing so, you will be keeping the tradition to give Matanot Laevy-Onim: gifts to at least two people in need.

Happy Purim!



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Chag Purim, Chag Purim: for children or adults?

BY DAVID FAINSLIBER, JCOGS RELIGIOUS LEADER

There are two variations of the classic Purim song, “Chag Purim, Chag Purim.” One version goes: “Chag Gadol LaYeladim, it is a great holiday for children”; the second is sung: “Chag Gadol Layehudim, it is a great holiday for the Jews.” I have often wondered whether this holiday was designed for children or for adults. On the one hand, the Book of Esther is brutal and difficult, telling of the potential genocide of the Persian Jews.



On the other hand, we dress up, shake groggers and eat hamentaschen.

Purim happens to be my favourite holiday of the year. The unbridled joy and festive nature of the day brings out in me that inner child that wants to come out to play everyday. Thankfully, in the day-to-day, our two young children do tease out that free spirit in me, as I try to keep up with them. But Purim incites a particularly special quality of childhood, a call to be uninhibited and irrepressible.

It is these qualities which we so cherish — and which we also fear — in children. Tradition teaches that on Purim, we are not supposed to be able to tell the difference between the hero Mordechai and the villain Haman. In some ways, this is the spirit of openness in children that we fear when we tell them not to talk to strangers. We worry that they will not be able to tell the difference between someone acting kindly, like Mordechai, and someone acting dishonourably, like Haman. But it is also this undistinguished innocence and curiosity that we love in children. This is their inquisitive spirit and joie de vivre.

In truth, Purim has something for everyone. For children (and some adults), it is a time to hear a story that teaches about great challenges in this world. It is a time to gently come out of one’s innocence, never losing that joyful spirit, even when faced with the loss of one’s naiveté. For adults (and some children), Purim is a time to celebrate what it means to be a child within: carefree, joyful, and unrestrained. And, the children will enjoy seeing that you, too, can play at their level. So enjoy the festival! And be a bit less inhibited. Dress up, eat an extra hamentasch, or have another glass of wine!

Blessings to you for a carefree and kid- and adult-friendly Purim,

David Fainsilber, religious leader

Philip Sherman installed on Jan. 24

Philip Sherman, former rabbinic intern at JCOGS, will be installed on January 24th at Temple Beth Elohim in Wellesley, Mass. Rabbi Sharon Cohen Anisfield of the Hebrew College Rabbinic School will install Rabbi Sherman. The festive celebration will include the naming of the Philip and Leah Sherman’s daughter, Elsie Eden Sherman, who was born in October.



Special guest at Religious School

Guest teacher Zippora (Zippy) Rogg stands with the children after class. Zippy and her husband Geoffrey are Stowe residents who made Aliyah to Israel a couple of years ago. Zippy, who was a former teacher at JCOGS, has a true love for being in the classroom. She presented photos of her new home country of Israel, and brought maps and cultural information for the students. *Pictured from left to right: Joseph Ellner, Emma and Gabbie Schaffer, Lucy Andrus, Zippy Rogg, Sadie Ellner, Augie Leven, Maya Fried, and Rio Mentz.*

Fond greetings to my fellow JCOGS members and friends!



With the recent winter solstice in our rearview mirror, we can look forward to both the height of the ski (and snowboarding) season and increasingly longer daylight. Snow carnivals, ice sculptures, smores roasting in open fires — all add to the outdoor winter scene of our beautiful greater Stowe area. Inside, JCOGS has been enjoying the warmth of our new religious leader David Fainsilber and the numerous programs serving our educational, cultural, and community needs. And just last month we honored our new members with a special Shabbat service and dinner, a tradition that we plan to continue periodically.

As we make the inevitable progression through the seasons, we can all look forward with confidence to new horizons at JCOGS. David will be ordained in June, becoming JCOGS’ first fulltime rabbi. With “Rabbi David” in residence and as the catalyst, we will have the opportunity to bring JCOGS to a new level, both as a center of Jewish life and as a larger part of the fabric of Stowe and northern Vermont.

The lay leadership is equally energized to build an exciting future for our community in partnership with David. From management and budget planning to programming, your board of trustees and committee chairs are preparing for a vibrant 2014-2015 operating year and beyond. But we ask for your help and support! Every one of our members is vital, and has a unique connection with JCOGS in terms of needs, contributions, and touchpoints. We encourage you to find some activity, program, or event in which to participate. Come and experience the peace of a music-filled Kabbalat Shabbat, enrich yourself with one of numerous guest lectures and special shows, participate in one of the many social or community service functions, or just relax and enjoy the company of friends. The experience will be rewarding! And, of course, we deeply appreciate your continuing membership, and support of our development and fundraising activities that sustain and grow our organization.

So please help to “move the needle” forward as JCOGS continues its wonderful journey. Stay safe, enjoy this beautiful season, and best wishes to all.

L’Shalom,

Bruce Rosenberg (on behalf of the executive committee)



New members honored at special Shabbat

By RICH JACOBS

Despite the cold, snowy, and blustery winter weather on Friday, Dec. 20, JCOGS members gathered at the New Member Shabbat Service and Dinner to warmly welcome and honor our newest friends. Approximately 40 new and not-so-new members of our community participated in the event, which was coordinated by our membership committee.

New members who attended the event were: Lori Webert, Shelli and Alan Solomon, the Dara Schecter/James Flynn family, and Margie and Howie Dananberg, as well as the Alison Link/David Fainsilber family. New members who were not able to join us included: Susan Bauchner, Ron and Stacey Wagner, Ellen and Larry Gibs, Ben and Rachel Clarkin, Harvey Johns, and the Wendy and Colin McCreight family, as well as Marni and Roger Singer.

Each of our newest community members introduced themselves during the Shabbat service, and entertained



Sarah Ellner and Helenmarie Patashnick present a welcome basket to new members Shelli and Alan Solomon.

us with little-known details about themselves during the Shabbat dinner.

Thank you to Religious Leader David Fainsilber for his coordination of the Shabbat service. Also, we thank Israel and Sarah Ellner for all their work with the culinary coordination of our Shabbat dinner. In addition, Helenmarie Patashnick and Sarah Ellner presented our new members with a Welcome Shabbat basket containing a homemade

challah and a bottle of wine.

Of course, there were also the many members who brought food for the dinner, set up and cleaned up from the dinner, helped with the overall organization and coordination of this special occasion, or blessed us with their presence on this winter evening. The New Member Shabbat Service and Dinner reminded each of us how much we all enjoy spending time with our JCOGS family.

Mazel Tov Simchas in our community

Carol Good celebrated her 80th birthday with her family at a celebration in Boston on Jan. 11.

Lyle Micah Patashnick, son of Helenmarie and Mel Patashnick, married Keri Shoemaker in Washington D.C. on Nov. 9.

Bernie Nisenholtz celebrated his 80th birthday on Jan 23.

Gretchen and Al Besser celebrated their 61st wedding anniversary on Dec. 28.

Barbara Stern will celebrate her 80th birthday on Tuesday, Feb. 4.

Carole and Steve Lichtenstein

will attend Bar Mitzvahs for their grandson, Gabriel Lichtenstein, in Maryland on Jan. 11 and their grand nephew, Joseph Lichtenstein, in Virginia on Jan. 18.

Laura Fried and Owen McDermott became the parents of Finnian McDermott Fried this fall.



A WARM MAZEL TOV to our friend and founding JCOGS member, Carol Good, who celebrated her 80th birthday this month with family in Boston.

Tzedakah

"Who donates much to charity becomes richer for it ..."

Zohar, iii 110b

We gratefully acknowledge the generosity of these thoughtful contributions in honor and memory of friends and loved ones. The following gifts were made between November 1, 2013 and January 8, 2014.

GENERAL FUND

In celebration of Carol Good's 80th birthday...

Gretchen & Al Besser
Carole & Steve Lichtenstein

In celebration of Bernie Nisenholtz's 80th birthday...

Michelle & Sam Labow
Gretchen & Al Besser
Eugene Posnick
Harriet & Mark Rosenthal
Carole & Steve Lichtenstein
Ronna & Arnold Ziegel

In memory of Bunny Lechter's sister, Dr. Fern Cramer-Azima...

Gretchen & Al Besser

In honor of the birth of the grandson of Ann & Steve Fried...

Carole & Steve Lichtenstein

In honor of the marriage of Helenmarie and Mel Patashnick's son...

Carole & Steve Lichtenstein

In recognition to Joan & Bob Katz

Eugene Posnick

In memory of Steven K. Teplick

Carol Teplick

In honor of Mervin Brown's birthday

Anita & Ezra Beinhaker

In honor of the special birthday of Michael Kazakoff

Mitzi & Hillel Becker
Anita & Ezra Beinhaker

Yahrzeits

January 18 – February 22
18 Shevat – 22 Adar 1

The following Yahrzeits go by the Gregorian calendar unless the Hebrew date observance was specifically requested by the family. The names of loved ones will be read at the indicated services.

January 19 – February 8
18 Shevat – 8 Adar 1
Service: Feb. 7

Manuel Hazen
Reva Schneps
Shirley Greenbaum
Robert Digiulio
Max Minkin
Solomon Jack Baumrind
Bertha Figarsky
Eric Jacobs
Steven Alan Dorfman
Nicholas Fon Eisen
Rhoda Lee Baskin Kaplan
Fred Erstein
Haskell Robern
Fred Greenbaum
Bertram Polow
Ethel Spielvogel
Murray Dananberg
Jean Lazar
Dinah Adelson
Albert Katsof
Gertrude Anna Zamvil
Harvey Steinerman
Randolph Wolfgang
Ann Bayer
Jack Lyman
Monte Aaron Feinstein

February 9 – 22
9 Adar 1 – 22 Adar 1
Service: Feb. 21

Harry Moses Lazar
David Tunick
Claire Rosenbloom
Sigmund Weichsel
Louis Davis
Nathan Siegel
Dinah Brauer Poley
Harry Feinman
Harold Rosen
Zui Hirsch Lazar
Anne Klein
Zalman Raniel Stern
Joseph Greenbaum
Abraham Allen
Ruth Feinstein



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Calendar

ONGOING

Friday Night Shabbat services will be held on the following dates at 6 p.m.: Feb. 7 and 21, and March 14 and 28. The service on Feb. 7 will include the beautiful clarinet playing of JCOGS member David Goodman.

Torah study will be held on the following Saturdays at 10 a.m.: Feb. 8 and 22, and March 29.

Religious School classes will be held on the following Wednesdays from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.: Feb. 5, 12, and 19, and March 5, 12, and 19.

FEBRUARY

Friday, Feb. 7: 6 p.m., special performance by JCOGS member and clarinetist David Goodman.

Sunday, Feb. 16: 3 p.m., Valentine opera film. Opera to be announced.

Saturday, Feb. 22: Après-ski social event. Come shmooze with JCOGS members and have a hot chocolate or beer after a day of skiing. Time and

place to be announced.

Wednesday, Feb. 26: noon, book club discussion at Pie in the Sky. Book to be announced.

MARCH

Sunday, March 2: 3 p.m., Genealogy Workshop and Talk by Fern Blood.

Saturday, March 15: Purim Celebration. 5:30 p.m., kids and family Purim activities; 6:30 p.m., all-ages Purim party and Megillah reading. Come eat, drink, and be merry. Treats and beverages will be served. Remember to come in costume and mask. Graggers (noisemakers) will be provided.

APRIL

Tuesday, April 15: 5:30 p.m., Second Night JCOGS Community Passover Seder.

Other event information, including Mah Jong Lessons for Beginners and Yiddish Movie Club, will be announced in the weekly emails. For info: JCOGS, 253-1800.



CHANUKAH was a fun and festive time at JCOGS this year, including a special Shabbat service and dinner on Nov. 29 at the home of our religious leader, David Fainsilber, and his wife Alison Link, and a Chanukah party on Dec. 1 at JCOGS. Pictured: Gabbie and Emma Schaffer light the Menorah.