

**Report to Har Shalom Board April 21, 2020, from March 18 to present****Rabbi Laurie Franklin****Abstract**

*-Har Shalom public activities have been virtual since March 13: Services, Torah study, Atidaynu, Beit Midrash, Lunch with the Rabbi, Passover Seder*

*-Introduced new activity, "Lunch with the Rabbi" on Wednesdays at noon*

*-Now, am present at all Har Shalom Torah study sessions and lead all services*

*-Pastoral appointments are online*

*-Virtual activities are attracting both out-of-town and out-of-state participants*

*-Have been entering all my activities on the Har Shalom leadership calendar; every board member has access and can see.*

*-I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with the Executive Committee, discuss how we are doing, and consider future planning and dreaming!*

**Services, Special Observances**

- First Saturday 4/4
- Kabbalat Shabbat 3/20, 4/17
- 4th Friday 4 All 3/27
- Passover Seder 4/9

**Education, Youth and Adult**

- Atidaynu sessions 3/29
- Torah study with Hebrew and regular Torah study 3/21, 3/28, 4/4, 4/11, 4/18
- Beit Midrash, Mondays 3/23, 3/30, 4/6, 4/13, 4/20
- Lunch with the Rabbi 3/25, 4/1, 4/8, 4/15

**Har Shalom Administrative Planning**

- Weekly meet-up with President David Cox
- Handwritten, personal notes for Yahrtzeit letters (monthly)
- URJ seminar on congregational finances 3/31

**Pastoral, Outreach, and Greater Community**

- **Pastoral** (details are confidential) approximately 45 interactions, consisting of Individual sessions with congregants, phone calls and emails, responses to requests for information, zoom orientation, or services
- **Greater Community**
  - **Press:** Missoulain Passover article April 4 (see page 2)
  - **Special events and meetings**
    - MIC Action Network 3/23, 3/26, 3/31 active caller training
    - Rattlesnake neighbor-2-neighbor network 3/27, 4/7, 4/14, 4/21
  - **Antisemitism**
    - Meeting with UM President Seth Bodnar and Chief of Staff Kelly Ward, about reverse swastika architectural detail on a UM residence hall 3/27
    - **Missoula County Public Schools:** on hold for now as schools are closed

## Passover 2020: Discoveries from a Narrow Place

LAURIE FRANKLIN  
Apr 4, 2020



**C**elebrating Passover in the era of Covid-19 forces us from old habits and

fosters new awareness. This year, instead of gathering with family and friends for a ritual Passover seder meal, many of us will participate in online seders. With fresh eyes, we seek the essence of the festival so we can bring it into our virtual celebrations.

So, what are some of the essential observances of the Passover seder? We set up a ceremonial seder plate, with special ritual foods, and a matzoh plate, with three portions of unleavened bread. We hear the Four Questions, beginning, “Why is this night different from all other nights”? We tell the story of four children, whose capacity for understanding the meaning of the Passover seder differs, and we learn to explain the ritual to each one, according to their individual needs. Throughout the seder evening, we rejoice and linger at the table, tell the story of the exodus, drink the obligatory four glasses of wine (or grape juice), sing psalms and other songs, and eat a sumptuous meal. We savor our freedom. And as always, we explore current events in light of the Passover story, both marveling at ancient miracles and recognizing the need for freedom, justice, and Divine beneficence today.

Jewish tradition teaches that, on Passover, each of us must experience the exodus from Egypt as if it happened to us personally. Every Passover, I imagine that I am liberated from every oppressive pattern, both internal and external. I imagine each of the ten plagues vividly, walk through the Sea of Reeds on dry land, and dance with Miriam on the far shore. It’s a powerful practice.

So, how might we relate personally to the exodus in the era of Covid-19? Here’s a Passover perspective: the Hebrew word for Egypt is “mitz-RAI-im”, meaning “narrow places”. Some say that the name refers to the narrow, cultivated banks of the Nile River in ancient Egypt. In addition, our sages teach that “narrowness” refers to the severe limitations of slavery experienced by the

Israelites in a time when we could not fully be ourselves.

Today, sheltering at home, most of us are literally living in constricted circumstances. Our physical contact is limited. Our circles of movement are tighter. Businesses have either closed or contracted their scope of work. Our incomes are diminished. We are truly in a narrow place.

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Sequestered at home, we might be taking walks or gardening, cooking from scratch, reading books, playing music, or drawing. We might be fixing broken things, mending, organizing papers, finishing old projects, and starting new ones. We might be playing with our children and helping them with schoolwork. We might be reaching out by phone and internet to friends, neighbors, and distant family because we realize how important they are to us. We might volunteer to support the needs of essential workers and those who are shut in. We might find ourselves taking joy in small things, even as we face unknowns.

In reaction to concern for our health and the health of those we love, I pray that we find ourselves affirming the precious gift of our existence. When we emerge—eventually, God-willing—from our narrow places, may our Passover-like experience lead us to a heightened appreciation of freedom, justice, and loving-kindness. May we emerge with gratitude and the vision to transform our gratitude into action.

Rabbi Laurie Franklin is the spiritual leader of Har Shalom. She can be reached at [rabbilaurie@har-shalom.org](mailto:rabbilaurie@har-shalom.org).

This year, Har Shalom will not host a face-to-face seder. Instead, we will celebrate our seder online. Although there is no charge to join in, we ask that registrants make a donation of any amount to the Missoula Food Bank. For more information, please visit [www.har-shalom.org](http://www.har-shalom.org).