



קהילה הקונסרבטיבית בוויקטוריה קולנו Our Voice **ROLEINU**

From the Rabbi's Desk

Passover Seder and Daily Spiritual Practice



I have always thought of the Passover Seder as a healing ritual. The elements of this ceremonial feast invoke symbolism that creates a sense of grounding, security and hope while compelling participants to examine themes of liberation. Upon waking this morning, I thought about how the elements of the Seder are a road map to staying positive, hopeful, connected and generative. The elements of the Seder can be a framework for daily practice and self-talk; something that I sense we all desperately need during these moments of global anxiety.

Kaddesh: *Sanctifying the moment*. How do you wake up in the morning? Do you take a moment to connect with Divine Source and hold gratitude for a new day with all of its fresh possibilities? Obviously festivals are ripe for religious and spiritual expression, “In those days at this time”. Festivals open us up to the cycles of nature and offer us

powerful paradigms and archetypes to plug into for renewal, gratitude, liberation, forgiveness — if only we could really immerse ourselves in the themes and rituals of our festivals which are designed to nourish us throughout the year. Unfortunately we do not live in the world of our ancestors who could truly immerse themselves into our festivals. The complexities of our lives and the speed of communication result in a bombardment of information and emotions that need to be curated and understood. When combined with living in an economic context that does not understand or honour our festivals it means that we need to put more intention and energy into our daily spiritual lives. I am playing with the idea of spreading out the essence of Passover into our everyday life. *Kaddesh*, take a moment to acknowledge the new day, created anew with the potential for goodness, wholeness and joy. [\(Continued on Page 3\)](#)

Documents for Pesah preparation

- Rabbinical Assembly 2018/5778 Pesah Guide [click here](#)
- Hameitz Sale Power of Attorney form [click here](#)
- Tips for a kid – Friendly Passover [click here](#)
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Passover 2018/5778 times at a glance

- **Saturday, March 24, 9:00 am** *Shabbat HaGadol*
- **Thursday, March 29**
 - o **12:30 pm** Last time to sell *hametz*
 - o **9:00 pm to midnight** Checking and removal of *hametz/ bdikat hametz*
- **Friday, March 30,**
 - o **8:00 am** Morning minyan and Completion of Learning to replace Fast of Firstborn (*Siyyum Bekhorim*)
 - o **11:00 am** Latest time *hametz* is permitted to be eaten
 - o **Noon** Deadline for *bi'ur hametz* (burning and annulment of *hametz*)
 - o **6:00 pm** Communal Seder: doors open at 5:30; Seder will start promptly at 6:00pm
 - o **Light candles at 7:23 pm**
- **Saturday, March 31, 9:00 am**
 - o Passover Festival Services Day One
 - o **Light candles after 8:30 pm**
- **Sunday, April 1, 9:00 am** Passover Festival Services Day Two
- **Thursday, April 5,**
 - o **7:00 am** Morning Minyan
 - o **Light candles at 7:32 pm**
- **Friday, April 6,**
 - o 9:00 am Passover Festival Services Day Seven
 - o **Light candles at 7:34 pm**
- **Saturday, April 7,**
 - o **9:00 am** Shabbat/ Passover Festival Final Day Services
 - o **10:45 am** Yizkor
 - **8:41 pm** Return to *hametz*
 - We look forward to experiencing a joyous and liberating Passover together in our extended Emanu-El Family.

Hag Pesah Sameah vekasher!

Fast of Firstborns/Siyyum Bekhorim

Friday, March 30 8:00 am



If you are a firstborn, it is incumbent upon you to fast on *Erev Pesah* as a sign of thanksgiving for the sparing of your ancestral peers. Also, for those who are not firstborn but have an oldest child who is not yet old enough to fast, it is appropriate for you to fast on their behalf. Instead of fasting, you may join us at the synagogue on Friday, March 30 at 8 am for *davening* and a wonderful *siyyum* to follow. What is a *siyyum* you ask? A *siyyum* is a completion of a considerable amount of Torah learning. The completion of a tractate or an order of *Mishnah* mandates a special celebration where some of the beautiful pieces of learning are shared - and of course you cannot have a Jewish celebration without food - so food is a central component of the *siyyum*.

According to Jewish law, the joy of a *siyyum* takes precedent over the fast of the firstborn - so if you are a firstborn and want to avoid this fast, come to the *siyyum*, have some breakfast and enjoy some great learning.

U**rhatz:** *What needs to be cleansed?* What is lingering from yesterday that may negatively affect today? What are the preconceived notions that float around our thoughts that serve as obstacles to becoming aware of our spiritual guides, the Divine nudges that place us on our paths of authenticity?

K**arpas:** *Dipping, eating and blessing greens.* Ask self the question what is sprouting in my life? What is sprouting today? What are the subtle changes, the harbingers of hope and anticipation for goodness in my life? Think of them, hold them, and see them as a blessing.

Y**ahatz:** *Breaking and hiding the middle matzah.* If you need to check the news for the day - now is the time to do so. Go and see what is broken. Acknowledge there is brokenness in our world and for many of us in our lives. Wrap the brokenness in a cloth and, like the *afikomen*, hide it. Understand that our emotional reactions to the perceived brokenness may not yet be fully in sync with reality. Much of what is presented to us as broken may only reflect a certain vantage point or world view. The bombardment of ideas and seemingly irrational behaviours of world leaders can lead to a sense of overwhelm. This oversaturation of negativity blinds us to the opportunities for bridge building and *tikkun olam*, cosmic repair potential. Non reactivity allows us time to digest, ponder, summon our compassion, understanding, and open ourselves to intuitive and higher consciousness responses. Wrapping up the broken *matzah* and putting it away for a moment does not equate with denial or escapism. It allows for the kind of silence that is a fence for wisdom.

M**aggid:** *The telling of our story.* At Passover we retell the story of our liberation. Each new day has its own story. What story are we telling ourselves? What are the cognitive loops that we need to break to gain greater power and wholeness? Is our story for the day the same old one from yesterday and last week? Are we telling our stories to Divine Source? Are we invoking God to gift us clarity? Are we gifting ourselves by judging self in a positive caring way? Can we tell our story in a different way, in a context that will allow us new insight and strength? At Passover we begin our story with degradation and we end with praise. We each must ask ourselves -“Can I end my story with praise or thanksgiving? If I cannot, maybe I am not telling the story that really fits or I am not taking the story to its real conclusion. Where do I find the courage and faith to end my story with praise?” At the very least we must know that the theology of our liturgy, some of it very ancient, teaches us daily that God has faith in us, *rabbah emunatkha* and that our *neshama*, our soul is pure.

R**ahatzah:** *Second washing of the hands.* This metaphoric cleansing is for us to clear any residual *shmutz* from our story telling in order to feel fully worthy of a place at the table of humanity. Being human, created in the image of the Divine, affords us infinite nobility and honour. We hold the potential to bridge and merge the realms of Earth and the realms of God. Our human soul is the lamp of the Eternal One and we have outrageous and awesome value.

M**otzi Matzah:** *Blessing before eating matzah.* We have a lot to learn from the *matzah*. The *matzah* is as basic as it gets. *Matzah* is not fluffy puffed up bread. We need to remember and we need to anticipate this; our place at the table is not about our ego. Our place at the table is not an extension of our education, our wealth, our privilege or lack thereof. Our place at the table is our basic humanity. Our place at the table is our soul. The exaggerations that we impose on others and on self to create distinctions and separations are artificial constructs. There must be a place at the table for all humans. In the words of my mother, “we will only be free when we are all free.” The cost of ego inflation is too dear. The selling of fear and separation leads to falsehoods and violence. One of our first expressions of faith is to trust that the table of humanity is big enough and will always expand to allow for all of us. [\(Continued on Page 4\)](#)



Remembering our Loved Ones

On the last day of Passover, Saturday April 7 we will observe the ritual of *Yizkor*. This ritual is a means for us to process the emotional impact of the empty chair we encountered at our *Pesah seder*.

Through the *Yizkor* ritual we affirm that memory is more powerful than death. As we invoke the memories of our loved ones; we remember the love, the devotion and the deep and meaningful life lessons with which we were left. We remember because it brings us connection and healing. We remember and we embrace the ritual as a way of expressing our love and care for their souls. Our tradition urges us to offer *tzdakah* (righteous charity) in their memory after the festival ends as the most fitting *mitzvah* for *Yizkor* because we the living, the embodied can engage in *mitzvot* as a memorial to our loved ones.

Please join the congregation on the final day of Passover as we remember, connect and ask God to hold our loved ones souls in safe keeping in the Bond of Eternal Life. *Yizkor* takes place right after the Torah service.

Maror, Korekh: *The bitter herbs and Hillel sandwich*. Not all flavours are sweet. Bitterness is part of the human experience. Bitterness in our lives is a message that we are far from our path of authenticity and feeling far from Divine Source. Yet God is really fully right here with us if only we can lift the veil of illusion and allow ourselves to feel joy, which requires the faith to be fully present and vulnerable. The Hillel sandwich reminds us to get outside of our places of comfort, just as the flavours of the *aroseit*, the *matzah* and the *maror* mix in this combination of foods, that we need to experience multiple flavours and expressions of life.

Shulhan Orekh: *The set table*. We are in the moment, at the feast, enjoying the meal. We are not worrying about the future or reviewing resentments or past disappointments. We are present, we are worthy, and we are loved.

Tzafun: *Bring back the hidden broken matzah*. Sometimes God's presence is hidden from us. Sometimes answers and clarity are hidden from us. Without the hidden, nothing could be revealed. "What is to be revealed to me today? What do I sense I need to put my energy into even if it has not yet been revealed to me? What small part of the broken *matzah* is mine to fix? Where does the *matzah* piece that I am holding fit in the puzzle?" Just because it is hidden does not mean that it does not exist or cannot be accessed.

Barekh, Hallel, Nirtzah: *Blessings, thanksgiving and receiving*. Imagine how richer our lives would be if we perceived abundance and not lack. I sense that the key to abundance and Divine flow is through blessing and thanksgiving. Invoking God's presence into our lives with genuine gratitude opens up the channel for more presence. Holding praise and thanksgiving is a way for us to clearly see and inventory the real stuff in our lives and to feel the Divine nudge towards our path of authenticity. We learn in Torah that we are never free from - but always free to. We are liberated from the realm of illusions and ego in order for us to connect and serve Divine Source.

May we all experience a liberating and meaningful Pesah,

Rabbi Harry.