



JEWISH COMMUNITY OF THE HILL COUNTRY

May – June, 2024



Jessica and David Feldman

On March 29th I received an email via our website from Jessica and David Feldman. They were members of Temple Beth-El Reform Synagogue in San Pedro, California and were looking for a place to park to view the eclipse. As of that date, none were available. Peg's HOA was having an Eclipse Party, so she invited them to park in her driveway and attend the party with

us. They arrived around 8:00am and we had a fine time getting to know each other. I found that David and I have medicine in common, he being a retired Interventional Radiologist. He brought an assortment of camera equipment but the cloud cover foiled most of his efforts. But we all agreed that making new friends—and a great meal—made up for the disappointment!



Shabbat Services

Friday, May 10, 2024 at 6:30pm

Friday, May 24, 2024 at 6:30pm

Friday June 14, 2024 at 6:30pm

Friday June 28, 2024 at 6:30pm



Torah Study

Saturday, May 4, 2024 No Torah Study

Saturday, May 18, 2024 at 11:30am to 1:00pm

Saturday, June 1, 2024 at 11:30am to 1:00pm

Saturday, June 22, 2024 at 11:30am to 1:00pm

Dayenu



It's one of our most beloved songs, for Passover or any other day. Its bouncy melody could very well be of modern origin but in fact, both the melody and words date to the 9th Century. Above is a photo of Dayenu appearing in the famous Birds' Head Haggadah, the oldest surviving illuminated Ashkenazi Haggadah dated to the beginning of the 14th century.

In modern times, the song has transcended the Seder due to its popularity. Take, for example, in Israeli screenings of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, after the line "if only we hadn't made this journey... if only the car hadn't broken down... oh, if only we were amongst friends... Or sane persons," the audience sings the chorus of "Dayenu." And surely, that's enough!

A Brief Announcement . . .

Spring is upon us and many of us were looking forward to visiting the Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park and touring the "Texas White House."

Unfortunately, the park is in the midst of a reconstruction project and that tour will not be available until an unspecified date in 2025. We will be working on another venue and will keep you informed. If you have a suggestion for an Adventure, please let us know!

A Few Passover 2024 Photos



And So It Goes . . .

At many family Seders, it's customary for the Papa to give some thoughts or reflections on the meaning of Passover. This year our "Papa" was Michael Goldstein and the message he gave us was truly inspiring. So much so, that we are publishing it in its entirety on the final page of this issue of *Gedenk*.



Thoughts on Passover (April 27, 2024)

The Passover story is a universal one of overcoming oppression and striving for freedom. It is also the source of three core Judaic beliefs: The obligation to care for strangers; The requirement to worship a monotheistic deity that cannot be heard, seen, or touched; That every person is made in the image of God.

Today, we watch in horror as yet another devastating war unfolds in the Promised Land. Its consequences threaten Jews everywhere, even here in our own nation. It is important now to reflect on and consider the three messages of Passover: Freedom; Love; Justice.

One; Freedom: In Exodus, God commands Moses to tell Pharaoh, "So said the Lord, Let My people go out and serve Me." So this is not only about freedom from troubles. It is also about freedom to serve. God's covenant with Abraham marked the Jews as God's chosen people, but chosen has nothing to do with having special privileges. It has to do with having special responsibilities. We Jews are charged with making the world better... *tikkun olam*, repairing the world. That is what chosen means.

Two; Love: Every year the litany is the same: "You shall love the stranger because we were strangers in Egypt." All Jewish children have it seared into their brains again and again so they will always feel it in their heart of hearts. It doesn't matter if we were never slaves in Egypt. That's not the point. The point is that we are obligated to empathize with the suffering of others and to do something about it.

I believe that Judaism's single greatest contribution to civilization is that every human being is sacred and is worthy of dignity and respect.

Three; Justice: The Passover story remains a central tenant of Judaic social justice. Moses grows outraged by the cruelty he sees and kills an overseer who is beating a slave. He flees to Midian. He then gets his calling from a burning bush, and becomes the world's first abolitionist. Ever since, we Jews have been commanded to be moral in our dealings. Forty years in the desert burned it into our heads.

Many of us question whether anything we read in the Haggadah ever happened at all. It doesn't matter. What matters is the message. Passover reminds us that we must stand for all those who cannot stand for themselves; the enslaved, the poor, the addicted, the infirm... others, no matter the reason.

In Genesis, the angel tells Jacob: "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel, for you have wrestled with God and with men, and have prevailed."

We should use our freedom to wrestle with the crises in the Middle East and with injustice and oppression around the world. The covenant of Abraham demands it.

Let us not disappoint. One Golden Calf was certainly enough.

Chag Pesach Sameach. Happy Passover.