

SHABBAT VAYAKHEL-PEKUDEI

SHABBAT HACHODESH

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Torah Portion: Exodus 35:1—40:38

Exodus 12:1—20

Haftarah: Ezekiel 45:16—46:18

WHAT'S ON

Thursday 19th March, 4.30pm
Bnei Mitzvah Class
Saturday 21st March, 10am
Shabbat Morning Service— TBA
Sunday 22nd March, 6pm
Women's Seder CANCELLED
Thursday 26th March, 4.30pm
Bnei Mitzvah Class—last for Term 1
Friday 27th March, 6.30pm
Kabbalat Shabbat followed by pot luck dairy dinner—TBA
Saturday 28th March, 10am
Shabbat Morning Service—TBA
Sunday 29th March, 10am
King David Fete CANCELLED
Monday 30th March, 7.30pm
PJV AGM—this will now be online
Tuesday 31st March, 10am
Cuppa Club—guest speaker Joe Bentata— CANCELLED
Saturday 4th April, 10am
Shabbat Morning Service with the Choir—TBA
Wednesday 8th April
Erev Pesach 1st Seder Night
Thursday 9th April, 10am
1st Day Pesach Morning Service with Yizkor—TBA
Friday 10th April
OFFICE CLOSED—Good Friday Public Holiday
Saturday 11th April, 10am
Shabbat Morning Service—TBA
• Board Rep Lewis Bearman
• Shalom Faye Patkin
• Shammas Peter Esdaile
• Baalat Shirah Vered Harel
• Baalaat Koreh Nitzan Schell
21st March Rabbi Allison Conyer
28th March Rabbi Allison Conyer
4th April Judy Firestone
11th April Peter Esdaile and Noel Hall OAM
18th April Rabbi Allison Conyer

Drash on Vayakhel-Pekudei Shabbat HaChodesh

Rabbi Jonathan Keren-Black

Leo Baeck Centre for Progressive Judaism

This Shabbat is one of those with a unique name and meaning – Shabbat HaChodesh – the Shabbat of the month. It is the Shabbat of, or before, the new month of Nisan. Consequently, it is the Shabbat that announces the new year. This was laid out clearly, earlier in Exodus, where we are told: "This month ['Aviv, spring' which becomes Nisan] will be the beginning of the months, the first month of the year" (Ex.12:2). This often causes confusion since we all know that the new year starts with Rosh Hashanah in Tishrei six months later, (when the year will change to 5781). But we are really quite used to having different new years – 2020 started on 1 January – but exactly six months later the financial year will commence, on 1 July!

Who could have imagined last Rosh Hashanah or even on 1 January the scary and unfolding crisis that we would now be witnessing, or the devastated state of the economy we are likely to be experiencing by 1 July? As we approach the festival of Pesach, we are concerned for the state of our own health, of that of our children, our parents and especially the elderly and the already vulnerable. We are fearful of going shopping but also of running out of supplies – we are concerned about gathering with family and friends for our home or communal *s'darim* or other activities.

This Shabbat, we will read from the last two Torah portions in Exodus - *Vayakhel* and *P'kudei*. It might seem ironic that as we read *Vayakhel*, which is from the root of "gather together" from which we get *Kehila* (congregation), we will be trying to avoid doing exactly that – some of our congregations will be closed entirely, or discouraging people who may be at all under the weather from coming, or asking those who do, to spread themselves to the far corners of the shul. At the Leo Baeck Centre, we have taken out ¾ of our seats, every other row and every adjacent seat, to ensure "social distancing" – what anathema to the idea of *Kehila*! And we should acknowledge that, whilst it may only be coming to these extremes now in Australia and New Zealand, our Asian communities have already had some weeks of it. But we, like other congregations, are setting up other ways to "gather" at least virtually, so we don't leave congregants isolated and

Weekly Announcements

Ho'da'ot



unsupported. We will be streaming services, so if you don't mind switching on your computers, you'll be able to have more choice of services than ever before!

The portion starts with reminding us of the Sabbath Day – but it also says "you should kindle no fire". When domestic electricity first came along, the Rabbis at the time asked if it could be used on Shabbat – and as we know, the strict interpretation won the day for the Orthodox communities – the tiny spark jumping across the contacts as a switch is turned on was deemed to be "creating fire" – so no operating electric equipment! We interpret it differently. I use the "appropriateness" test. Is this appropriate to enhance the spirit of Shabbat? And whilst I do not wish to turn my computer or phone on and check my emails on Shabbat, I am certainly prepared to use the technology to bring the songs and prayers of Shabbat, the teachings of Torah and tradition, and the social contact of Shabbat, into the homes of isolated congregants.

The second portion, *Pekudei*, records the completion of the Tabernacle, and once it is finished, it is made holy, and the "glory of God", symbolised by a dense cloud, fills it. We today also need the presence of the "cloud", through which we can stream our holy services, and are enabled to maintain a sense of *Kehila Kedosha*, a holy community, even as this terrible plague afflicts us. With the huge and damaging hailstones of a month ago, and the ravaging hordes of locusts currently destroying everything in their path in East Africa, and now this terrible and in some cases deadly "plague", we will certainly be entering Pesach with trepidation and with experiences that none of our generation have had before. But as we have a different view of electricity on Shabbat, so do we have a different view of God's actions – I reject the idea that God has caused this virus – or indeed that God takes life at all. God has given us a natural world with natural disasters and each of us – indeed, everything in it, whether butterflies or even mountains, has a finite life. As we interpret in our Siddur when a loved one dies (page 619), "God has given and now God has received back – may God's closeness soothe our pain and console us". The book of Exodus started with God's apparent absence, as our ancestors struggled as slaves for hundreds of years – but, as our *Chumash* points out, it concludes with God's presence in our midst, dwelling in the cloud in the *mishkan* (dwelling place of the *sh'khina*). So, as we conclude the book of Exodus, we repeat the words *Chazak, chazak v'nitchazeik*, Be strong, be strong, and let us be strengthened by it – to face the next chapters, and the coming books, with faith and strength.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE BOARD OF ETZ CHAYIM ARE MEETING TONIGHT TO MAKE A DECISION ON OUR SERVICES.

WE WILL LET THE CONGREGATION KNOW TOMORROW VIA EMAIL WHAT DECISIONS HAVE BEEN MADE.

THANK YOU.

Last week, Rabbi David Saperstein spoke with Rabbi Gersh Lazarow at TBI on the topic of "Faith, Fanaticism and the Jewish Future".

Please see the attached recording of the event:

<https://upj.org.au/index.php/news-and-events>

<https://www.facebook.com/UnionforProgressiveJudaism/>

MESSAGE FROM ONE OF OUR MEMBERS

In the current misfortune who has befallen the world, we are being subjected to an unprecedented amount of negative reports. I am not disputing that some or most of these reports are necessary. Rather, I am highlighting the effect they are having on our friends and loved ones.

The media is undoubtedly the biggest culprit. Their excuse "the public's right to know" is often just an excuse to cause panic in an effort to boost ratings and newspaper sales. We also have "well meaning" friends who are scaremongers, and seem to delight in propagating bad news.

I have already had indications that this is highly detrimental to the psychological state of many of us. Yes - people who suffer from depression and anxiety are particularly vulnerable, but I have also seen friends who have never known depression succumb to this latest dilemma.

So what can we do? We need to be attuned to the behaviour of our friends and loved ones. Some keep their feelings hidden, but may exhibit tell-tale signs. We need to help them. We need to explain to them what they can and should do, and what is unnecessary worrying.

By helping them, we may in turn help ourselves cope better. The positive information we impart on others will undoubtedly rub off on us.



Bet-Olam Planning for COVID-19 Virus Emergency - New Protocols

We are continuing with a safe and measured response to this situation and will assess each funeral as we receive them. We will reduce the number of people attending family meetings and will ensure that these meetings take place in a large and open space. Funerals are held outside and we will live stream as many as we can, limiting attendance at events to a minimum. Cremations will take place in one of the very large chapels at Springvale rather than the small chapel at Elsternwick until further notice. Social distancing and personal hygiene will be maintained.

Please discuss your requirements with us which will naturally be consistent with Government regulation and best practice and please be mindful there may be some things we can no longer accommodate at this time.

Please carefully read the link attached from the Department of Health:

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-travellers>

If you wish to discuss any concerns, please call Rhonda Nirens on 9883 6237



SUNDAY
22 MARCH 6 PM
(PRE-PESACH)

ETZ CHAYIM'S
WOMEN'S
SEDER

THE REFUGEE EXPERIENCE

CANCELLED

We are disappointed to announce the cancellation of this year's Women's Seder - due to current health alerts and concern for the good health of our members and guests. Tickets that have been purchased will be refunded.

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO OUR

AGM

PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM VICTORIA INC.



PJV

The Voice of Progressive Judaism in Victoria
האיגוד ליחידות מתקדמות בויקטוריה

AND THE LAUNCH OF OUR
COMMUNITY ADVANCE CARE
ADVOCACY PROGRAM

WITH APOLOGIES TO HILLEL:

*Who will speak for me
when I can no longer speak for myself?*

מי ידבר בשמיכשאני
כבר לא יכול לדבר בעד עצמי?

DATE MONDAY 30 MARCH 2020
TIME 7.15PM FOR A 7.30PM START
NOTE **ONLINE**
NEW VENUE **DETAILS COMING SOON**
RSVP <http://bit.ly/2x9lzbL>

Grow



mental wellness programs

JEWISH GROW GROUP

Grow is a caring and supportive, community based NFP organisation that has developed a unique program for improving and maintaining mental wellbeing.

Grow offers practical steps and peer support to help you recover your mental health and achieve your personal goals.

The group will meet every Thursday, commencing 27th February from 7pm to 9pm at 707, Glen Huntly Road, Caulfield South.

- Anyone over 18yrs is welcome
- No referrals or appointments
- No charge (voluntary donation)

For more information please call Grow on 1800 558 268 or vic@grow.org.au



REMEMBRANCE

THOSE WHO HAVE PASSED AWAY THIS WEEK FROM OUR COMMUNITY - Boris Kaufman

SHLOSHIM - Zinaida Sinitsky • Bella Eidelman • David Graham • Veronica Ronc • Robert Freidman • Aharon Kopet

Yahrzeits Observed This Shabbat—Louis Segal, father of Yvonne Segal • Valerie Maltz, mother of Jonathan Maltz • Esther Helfrick, great-aunt of Rabbi Allison Conyer • Kathy Lancaster, partner of late father of Maureen Barten

We also remember all victims of violence and terrorism throughout the world.