

Sept 2019/5779

Congregation Etz Chaim



Sarah's Part of "The Story" (Cont. on page 6) By Cantor Beth Strassler

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While a student in Jewish Studies at Hebrew College, I took a course on the Akedah, the time when Abraham took his son, Isaac, up to the top of Mount Moriah. He believed he was being asked by God (Hashem) to offer his son as a sacrifice. This event is the text of the Torah reading on the second day of Rosh Hashanah.

I have long wondered where Sarah, Isaac's mother and Abraham's wife, was during this ordeal. It was important for me to find her voice in this story. Here is my "modern midrash", written in Sarah's voice:

"Yes, I laughed when the Holy One, blessed be He, announced that I would conceive a child in my old age with my beloved husband, who is even older.

I was suddenly filled with feelings of warmth and love. I could feel our baby in my arms, suckling at my breast, playing at my feet, chasing after his father. I could imagine him as a boy playing in the fields, tending the sheep, growing into a young man. And, yes, I laughed. I laughed from the pure joy that bubbled up from inside of me.

When Hashem took my husband aside and asked why I laughed, I was embarrassed. What's more, I was ashamed that I may have embarrassed Hashem. So, I lied. I said "I didn't laugh (in a spirit of doubt)." But Hashem's warm, gentle voice teased me and addressed me saying, "Yeeesss, you did-dd-..." in a tone that told me that I was understood. We both smiled.

My husband has always been a handsome man, whose eyes twinkle like the stars in the sky. From the moment I first saw him, I knew that the favor of Hashem was with him. He told me things that put words to many of the feelings I had hidden from others. I always felt like I was different from other people, but I could not articulate how or why. But Abraham and I spoke the same language, the language of the love of Hashem. We built a home together and I know that we have always loved each other as only a man and a woman who are joined together by Hashem's love are able.

We have lived long lives together. He endured many trials from Hashem. I have endured my own trials, but their details were never fully recorded. I think that you know of some of them, though.

There were many wanderings, many trials, and many years passed. My husband wondered how his covenant with Hashem would be fulfilled if we did not conceive a child to carry on after we were gone. However, we never felt abandoned by Hashem. I know that my husband talked with Him more than once. Each time, he felt re-assured.

And then, the day came when I laughed. My husband extended our hospitality to three strangers traveling through our land. Before they went on their way again, they announced that I would conceive a child in my old age with my beloved husband, who is even older. And I have explained to you why I laughed.

CEC Women's Reading Group— Fall 2019 Book List

By Maureen King

The Women's Reading Group meets monthly to discuss works by Jewish authors and books with Jewish themes. The group chooses books based on recommendations of the members.

We meet from 6:30 to 8 pm on the nights listed next to the books below. The Samuel Osher Memorial Library has at least one copy of each book. Please join us, whether you have read the book or not!

For more information, contact Susan Pierce at the_pierces@roadrunner.com, or contact the Library at somlibrarymaine@gmail.com.

September 12, 2019 *Where the Desert Meets the Sea* by Werner Sonne (novel set in 1947 Palestine).

October 10, 2019 *The Only Woman in the Room* by Marie Benedict (novel based on the true story of Hedy Lamarr).

November 14, 2019 *The Girl from Berlin* by Ronald H. Balson (historical fiction about a violinist born in 1918, a disputed Italian villa, and the mystery connecting them to the present).

December 15, 2019 *The Last Watchman of Old Cairo* by Michael Davie Lukas (novel connecting twin sisters from 1897 Cambridge, missing works from the Ibn Ezra Synagogue in Egypt, and a present day son of Muslim and Jewish parents).

January 8, 2020 *The Lost Girls of Paris* by Pam Jenoff (novel set in 1946, inspired by true events and the female secret agents involved).

A Note from the Board:

David Strassler and the Board of Directors of Congregation Etz Chaim wish you and your family a healthy, happy and peaceful New Year.

Samuel Osher Memorial (SOM) Library Recommendations

By Maureen King

As hard as it is to leave Maine's short but glorious summer behind, many of us are already thinking of the fall and the upcoming High Holidays. The Samuel Osher Memorial Library has a wide selection of children's and adult books and videos about Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and we invite you to stop in to check them out.

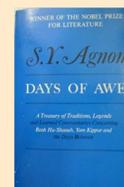
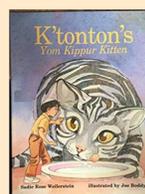
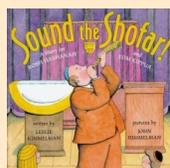
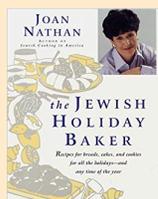
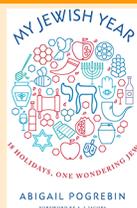
My Jewish Year: 18 Holidays, One Wondering Jew by Abigail Pogrebin is a great way to start the New Year. Her book is an exploration of 18 Jewish holidays and she begins with preparations for Rosh Hashanah. From the book jacket: "Although she grew up with some basic holiday rituals, Pogrebin realized how little she knew about the origins, purpose, and current relevance of the entire Jewish calendar. She wanted to understand what had kept the oldest traditions vibrant and the more-recently-added holidays urgent. She embarked on an entire year of research, observance, and writing about every ritual, fast, and festival in one Jewish year. This immersive exploration, first chronicled in a popular series for the *Forward*, is now greatly expanded in *My Jewish Year*, infused with even deeper layers of meaning and more intimate--often surprisingly humorous--details of her personal story. Whether you're seeking an accessible, digestible roadmap for Jewish life or a fresh take on what you've been practicing for a lifetime, Pogrebin's journey will leave you educated, charmed, and inspired."

If you are looking for a new favorite recipe, try Joan Nathan's *The Jewish Holiday Baker*, with a full chapter on each major holiday that includes delicious recipes, and either a personal reflection about the holiday, or traditions of friends and acquaintances. The SOM Library has a number of Jewish Holiday cookbooks, along with a wide variety of others, ranging from gardening to memoir cookbooks.

The SOM Library has a variety of High Holiday themed books for children and adults, from *Sound the Shofar* by Leslie Kimmelman and *K'tonton's Yom Kippur Kitten* by Sadie Rose Weilerstein to *Days of Awe* edited by S. Y. Agnon to *Rosh Hashanah Yom Kippur Survival Kit* by Shimon Apisdorf. Try a new view of the High Holidays, or review a tried and true version.

The Samuel Osher Memorial Library is generally open on Tuesday and Wednesday from 11-3 and on Thursday from 11-6; please check the Congregation Etz Chaim calendar at etzchaimme.org/calendar/ for exact days and times. If you would like to make arrangements to visit the SOM Library at other times, please email us at library@etzchaimme.org or somlibrarymaine@gmail.com.

We look forward to seeing you at the Library! Happy reading!



Samuel Osher Memorial Library
at Congregation Etz Chaim

Jewish Books, Music & Movies
for the
York County Community

Jewish Holidays 5780 & 5781 School Years 2019-20 & 2020-21

Rosh Hashanah

2019: September 30 & Oct 1

2020: September 19 & 20

Yom Kippur

2019: October 9

2020: September 28

Sukkot

2019: October 14,15

2020: October 3, 4

Sh'mini Atzeret

2019: October 21

2020: October 10

Simchat Torah

2019: October 22

2020: October 11

York County Jewish Community
Chanukah Party: Dec 15 2019 5-8 pm

Hanukah: First Candle

2019: Eve of December 22

2020: Eve of December 11

Congregation Etz Chaim

Tu b'Shevat Seder/Potluck at 6 pm

2020: February 7

2021: January 29

Purim

2020: March 10

2021: February 26

Hebrew School Model Seder

2020: April 2 4 pm

Passover: First Seder

2020: Eve of April 8

2021: Eve of March 27

Yom Ha'atsma'ut: Israel

Independence Day

2020: April 29

2021: April 15

Shavuot

2020: May 29

2021: May 17

Yizkor Book

By David Strassler

"Yizkor" literally means "may God remember". On Yom Kippur this year, you have an opportunity to join our congregation and follow the age old tradition of remembering those who have passed away, through thoughtful prayer. Parents, children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, partners and friends. We remember them and are enriched by our memories.

For the seventh year, we will publish the names of your loved one(s) in our Yom Kippur Yizkor booklet. With a donation of any amount, we will include their names.

Please send the names with your donation, **before September 23rd**, to Congregation Etz Chaim, PO Box 905, Kennebunk, Maine 04043 - Attn: Yizkor book.

If you donate \$100 or more, a bookplate will be added to one of our prayer books (one name per bookplate). Please indicate how you would like the bookplate to read.

If you have any questions, please contact David Strassler at: strassler@roadrunner.com

David & Beth 2018 Interview

By David Strassler

Check out Cantor Beth and Dr. David Strassler's interview on the web site of the Biddeford Cultural and Heritage Center from December 2018.

Included is a history of our Jewish Community from when they arrived in 1982 to the present:

<https://biddefordculturalandheritagecenter.org/dr-david-and-beth-strassler/>

Volunteers Needed for the Samuel Osher Memorial Library and Congregation Etz Chaim

By Maureen King

The Library and the Synagogue need your help with cleaning tasks.

We hope you find something on this list that inspires you to volunteer. You can volunteer for one afternoon or several. Some of these are one person projects and some are group projects, but all are things we need to do. We'd love to have you work with us!

Contact the Library at somlibrarymaine@gmail.com or call Maureen at 207-282-2907 (home) or 207-284-5771 (synagogue)! Leave a message and we'll get back to you.

Task List:

1. Sort, organize, and clean classroom supplies and second floor classrooms.
2. Sort, organize, and clean classroom supplies in storage hall.
3. Sort, organize, and clean back storage room.
4. Sort, organize, and label children's books.
5. Sort and organize storage closets.
6. Sort, organize, and clean kitchen items.
7. Sort and catalog CD's.



\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ Go Green!!! \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$

You can save trees and reduce costs by receiving your newsletter, and all Jewish community announcements, electronically (save our trees!).

Just write to our mail address:
Congregation Etz Chaim
PO Box 905
Kennebunk, ME 04043

or send an email:
Email: mail@etzchaimme.org

and ask to:

\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ "Go Green" \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$



Sarah's Part of "The Story" (continued from pg. 1)

By Beth Strassler

Today, our son is thirty and seven years of age. He is a sturdy, thoughtful and generous young man, full of curiosity. His eyes twinkle like the stars of the sky, and I know that the favor of Hashem is with him.

But a dream from last night is still with me this morning. Not its images, but the feelings that it stirred deep within me. Hashem came to me and, as it has happened in the past, left me with feelings I do not understand. I know Hashem meant to reassure me, but I do not know why. Hashem is here with me this morning and the Presence is soothing and comforting.

As I look out the window of my room, I see my husband, our son and two of our best servants preparing for a journey. They have large sacks of provisions and plenty of water. They have the wood and knife, so I know they will be gone for several days to make a sacrifice to the Lord. My husband is saddling his ass himself, which I have seen him do before when he is deeply troubled. This is the part of the picture that I do not understand.

The little entourage has been gone for three days. Today, I stand at the same window and search in the direction to which they journeyed. I feel Hashem's presence and I am not afraid, but I do not understand why I feel so strangely.

I open the window and feel the cool morning air. I breathe deeply and shade my eyes from the sun as I search into the distance. There is suddenly a strong gust of wind and a blinding flash of light on the horizon. Within minutes, I see a flock of birds flying from this place toward me. Soon, I hear them, chattering among themselves. A few more minutes bring them circling in front of my window, as if assuring me that all is right with the world. They circle excitedly before me and then fly back from whence they came.

The servants return home days later. I rush to meet them and inquire of my husband and son. They reassure me that they are safe, but Abraham has gone to Beer Sheva for awhile. Our son has gone his own way, as we knew he must one of these days.

I understand that my husband is troubled and has chosen to live by himself right now. This is not the first time. Somehow, I also know that he has aged more than the sum of the days of his journey and that the twinkle is gone from his eyes....."

I look forward to being with you at our High Holiday services this year!

Wishing you a happy, healthy year to come.

L'Shanah tovah לְשָׁנָה טוֹבָה

Beth

2019 Biddeford Parking Regulations

By Maureen King

Biddeford has instituted paid parking in the municipal lots, including the one located next to the Police Station. The cost is \$2 per hour and can be paid at the digital kiosks near the entrance to each lot. (Instructions below; more detailed information is available at biddefordmaine.org.)

Free parking is still available on the downtown streets, but some streets now have time limits. Bacon Street has no time limit from Foss Street to High Street; there is a two hour limit on Bacon Street in the Police Station block.

As you can imagine, on-street parking has become more challenging to find. Allow extra time to find parking, be prepared to drop people off in front of the synagogue, or be prepared to pay and park in the paid lots.

The Alfred Street Lot (police station) and the Foss Street Lot (on Foss St, down the hill from the synagogue) are the closest lots. The Downtown Lot on Franklin Street is farther away and it provides the first two hours of parking free, but you still have to register at the digital kiosk.

Purchasing Short-Term Parking Permits

The new payment kiosks are located near the entrance to each lot, and can be used to easily purchase parking permits.

Short-term parking permits may be purchased directly from the kiosks, based on availability. To register your vehicle, you must enter your license plate number using the kiosk's alphanumeric keypad and use a credit or debit card to pay for the transaction. The information will be digitally transmitted to parking enforcement officers to prove that you have paid to park – no need to return to your car to display a ticket or receipt.

In addition, there is a mobile app available to manage your parking permit called **WayToPark**. You can download the app for free for iPhone in the App Store or for Android in the Google Play store. The app is a convenient option to help you buy and extend your parking permit while on-the-go. Once you set up an account and store a payment method, you will simply need to find your location on the map, enter the hours you plan to park, and confirm your purchase.

If you would like to purchase a permit with cash, you may do so at the City Clerk's Office (during office hours) at City Hall. Be sure to know your license plate number! You may want to take a photo of your license plate to bring with you or have your vehicle registration in hand to ensure that you have provided the clerks with the correct plate number.

Failure to Purchase Parking Permits A \$35 fine will be issued if you do not purchase a parking permit for permit-required municipal lots.



Reflections on Etz Chaim's Visit to *Maine + Jewish: Two Centuries* at the Maine State Museum

By Jennie Aranovitch

On June 1, a group of ten members of the Congregation Etz Chaim community, five adults and five children, caravanned up I-95 North for a visit to the Maine State Museum in Augusta to view the current exhibit *Maine + Jewish: Two Centuries*. Having a keen interest in the topic and having loaned the museum some personal items, I had been wanting for some time to make the trek. Those who know me (and my absent sense of direction) will not be surprised that I found the thought of navigating the capital city alone too daunting.

Upon our arrival, the curator, Dr. Amy Waterman, assumed the role of tour guide and introduced us to the exhibit, a record-breaker for the museum on multiple levels. In just 1,500 square-feet of space, the museum, for the first time ever, attempted to capture the essence of an entire Maine ethnic community. Three years in the making, the exhibit contains the largest number of loaned items (62) in the history of Maine State Museum exhibits, demanding an unprecedented amount of exhibit research, and challenging the museum's physical capacity.

With photos, artifacts, family heirlooms, and religious/ritual objects (and even an entire Torah ark) loaned or gifted from families and synagogues from York County to Aroostook (including several pieces from Congregation Etz Chaim and its families), the exhibit covers a large geographical area and many different Jewish communities. Yet, it in no way feigns to be completely comprehensive in its scope, nor conclusive about the subject matter. Rather, it beautifully balances distinct historical aspects of specific Jewish populations throughout the state, while simultaneously tying all the communities together by subtly pointing to the commonalities that unite us as Jewish Mainers.

As the curator of the exhibit held at the Saco Museum in 2006 to commemorate Congregation Etz Chaim's centennial anniversary, I found the exhibit gratifying in a unique way. Of course, it was exciting to see Etz Chaim's finial scrolls and breast plate shined up and behind glass again, and it certainly was reassuring to see how many of the themes of the Maine State Museum's exhibit, researched by professionals, overlapped with the themes that I, a novice to museum curation, chose to highlight in *A Century of Jewish Life in Biddeford-Saco*.

But, what touched me most deeply, was that I was sharing the experience with my two children. And as I watched them looking at the 1956 photo of Etz Chaim's inaugural Bas Mitzvah group that included my mother. As I witnessed them reading the descriptive caption beside my great-grandmother Jennie's heart-shaped necklace, given to her by the Biddeford chapter of Hadassah, it struck me what a unique situation this was: In this day and age of ever increasing mobility – when, in Maine, “growing up” has almost become synonymous with “moving away” -- my children were on a group outing with Congregation Etz Chaim, gazing at objects that represent our familial ties to this special community that are now five generations deep. I was suddenly ultra-conscious of how anchored I feel, and I wondered whether my great-grandparents, one of Etz Chaim's founding families, ever even considered that a fifth generation of Aranovitches might still be part of the Jewish community in Biddeford. And then, conversely, I wondered if they would ever have doubted it for a minute.

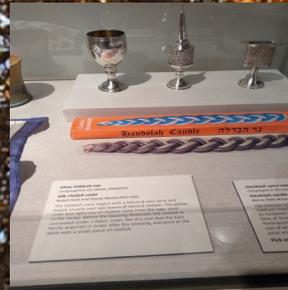
Of course, It remains to be seen if either of my children will settle in Maine in adulthood, but I realized that my own determination to stay was just one more heel-dig characteristic of the persistence and resolution in the Jewish Maine spirit that was so well captured by the exhibit. It was not always easy being Jewish in the Pine Tree state, but as *Maine + Jewish: Two Centuries* illustrates to its visitors, those who were among the earliest Jews to trod Maine soil were a steadfast bunch, who made a successful home here through hard work, ingenuity, adaptability, and by relying on their communities. And I was very happy, at that moment, that I had relied on mine to lead me – and my children –up the turnpike to Augusta that day.

Maine + Jewish: Two Centuries will be on display at the Maine State Museum until October 25.

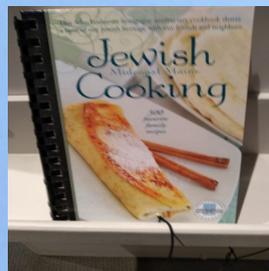
Fall Schedule of Events & Services

Friday, August 2,	7:00 PM – 8 PM
Saturday, August 10,	9:30 AM - 11 AM Torah Study
Saturday, August 17,	9:30 AM - 12 PM
Friday, September 6,	7:00 PM - 8 PM
Saturday, September 14,	9:30 AM - 11 AM Torah Study
Saturday, September 21,	9:30 AM- 12 PM
Friday, October 4,	7:00 PM - 8 PM
Saturday, October 12,	9:30 AM - 11 AM Torah Study
Hebrew School Opens	
Thursday, October 17,	4:00 PM - 5:30 PM
Saturday, October 19,	9:30 AM- 12 PM
Friday, November 1,	7:00 PM - 8 PM
Saturday, November 9,	9:30 AM - 11 AM Torah Study
Saturday, November 16,	9:30 AM - 12 PM
Friday, December 6,	7:00 PM - 8 PM
Saturday, December 14,	9:30 AM - 11 AM Torah Study
Hanukkah party	
Sunday, December 15,	5:00 PM - 8 PM
Saturday, December 21,	9:30 AM- 12 PM

*Shabbat services are followed with a kiddush.



Photos from *Maine + Jewish: Two Centuries* at the Maine State Museumn visit



Visit our website:

<http://etzchaimme.org>

Shabbat

Join us for:

Shabbat Services

*The first Friday evening, and the
third Saturday morning of the month*

Cantor Beth Strassler

Torah Study Session

The second Saturday of the month

Ritual Committee

Board of Directors at Congregation Etz Chaim

Julie Campisi
Linda and Frank Federman
Alan Fink
Maureen King
Cynthia Kurtz
Jeff Levy
Leah Macomber
Pamela Small Oliver
Sue Rubin
Jack Schraeter
David Strassler

York County (YC) Jewish Community Newsletter

This newsletter is published twice each year. It is intended to announce and report on Jewish community events in York County, and especially at Congregation Etz Chaim in Biddeford. It offers local perspectives on historical and contemporary aspects of Jewish life.

Adrienne Levy, Editor & Layout Design Consultants:

Levy family & Board members

mail@etzchaimme.org

If we have your email address, you have been removed from the snail mailing list.

If you wish to continue to receive a paper newsletter, just write/email us.

Our Synagogue

Our community programs are available to all members of the **York County Jewish Community** and are driven by the following mission statement:

“We promote Jewish cultural, social, educational and religious activities in southern Maine. Our primary goal is to make available a range of activities that facilitate the expression of what each individual finds valuable in the Jewish experience.

We attempt to accommodate individuals along the entire spectrum of Jewish practice and theology. We value and support the existence of a local formal congregation, but view our community programs as open to all interested people, regardless of whether or to what congregation they may be formally affiliated.”

Synagogue Contacts

Please mail Membership dues to:

*PO Box 905,
Kennebunk, ME 04043*

**Memorial Plaques, Prayer books,
Etz Chaim books of Torah:
Hebrew School/Services:
Shabbat Potlucks:
Library**

David Strassler:

967-5833

Beth & David Strassler:

967-5833

Linda Federman:

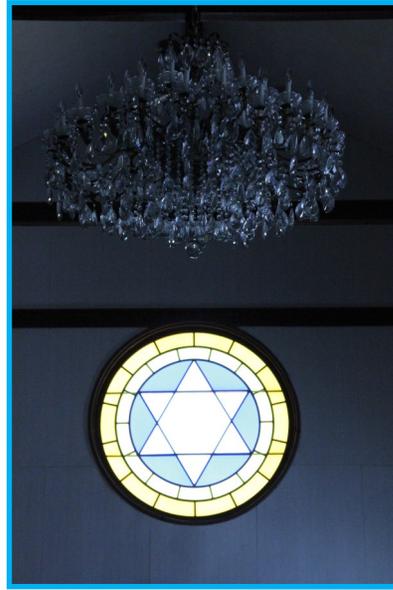
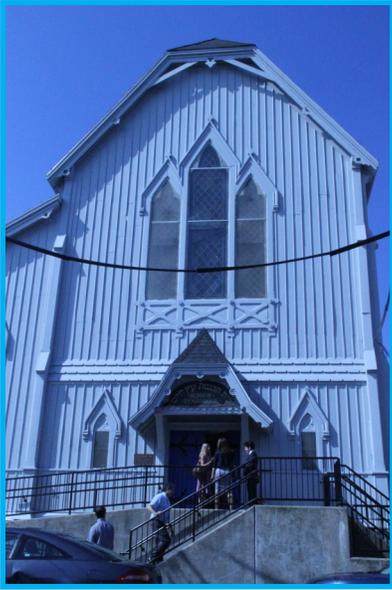
661-269-1233

Maureen King

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somlibrarymaine@gmail.com.

York County Jewish Community News



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Kennebunk, ME 04043*

Address Label