

Dovetail

A Journal by and for Jewish/Christian Families



Easter and Passover: Celebration and Challenge

Easter: the rebirth of hope, family fun, hard boiled eggs, new clothes and special china, fuzzy bunnies, and chocolate candy ... or pogroms, persecution, and terror? Passover: the rebirth of hope, family fun, hard boiled eggs, new clothes and special china, and matzoh and haroseth ... or deicide, death, and blood libel?

Interfaith families will want to focus, and should focus, on the elements in those lists that are positive and that are the same for both holidays. Freedom, whether from slavery or sin, and the renewal of the earth celebrated by delicious food and festive garb, are the major themes both of Passover and of Easter.

But the history that has made the unspeakable elements in the second halves of the list part of this season in the minds and hearts of many Jews cannot be ignored, especially in dual-faith households. Since Passover is linked to the feast held by the apostles on the eve of Good Friday, imbuing it with new symbolism, there is always tension in harmonizing the two celebrations. In this issue of Dovetail, we will explore some strategies for approaching this year's celebrations that will help bond, rather than divide, Jewish/Christian families.

The Christian establishment has taken great strides in this generation toward eliminating the official anti-Semitism that pervaded the churches for centuries: the Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Methodist leaderships are among those who have formally rejected the old canards and called

for reconciliation. The Roman Catholic Church, too—beginning especially with Pope John XXIII and continuing through the papacy of John Paul II—has striven to right old wrongs and correct anti-Jewish attitudes.

Unfortunately, this message has not always filtered down to the level of the congregation, or even to the pulpit. Some of us will hear sermons or homilies that echo horrid attitudes about Jews as wilfully unresponsive to the Gospel. What we do about that will depend on our particular temperaments, but if you are like me in dreading face-to-face confrontations while believing that Christians have a responsibility to address anti-Semitic attitudes wherever we encounter them, I advise you to write the offending clergy person.

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For Your Information

Joan Hawhurst is currently taking maternity leave from editing responsibilities at **Dovetail**. Associate editor and columnist Mary Hélène Rosenbaum is filling in for her.

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You might, whether you're a Catholic or not, quote from the booklet published by the National Council of Catholic Bishops which is excerpted on pages 7-8 of this issue. Note, too, in the same article, the call to caution regarding attempts to "baptize" the seder [Passover meal] by importing Christian symbols into it.

For those who will be attending seders for the first time, the excerpt from *How to Be a Perfect Stranger* on page 9 may help you feel more comfortable. Theodore Pulcini lends a non-Western Christian perspective (page 11), while on page 5, Katherine Baker's reflections add a personal touch. And on page 4 you will find a calendar list coordinating the two holidays ... and being explicit about whether the Jewish ones are actually starting on the day given or on the evening before!

By the way, the national conference "Interfaith Families in the 1990s: New Trends, New Voices," to be held

April 3-5 at Dickinson College in Carlisle, PA, will have Jewish and Christian liturgies and worship as a major focus. That Friday evening and Saturday will be Shabbat haGadol, the preliminary to Passover. That Sunday will be Palm Sunday, ushering in Holy Week before Easter. There will be two Jewish services and two Christian ones (one Catholic, one Protestant) geared toward dual-faith couples, with commentary, explanations, and discussion. (For a registration packet, call 1-800-530-1596.)

Finally, reflect on the fact that those of us who are intermarried are in a unique position to help heal the wounds and divisions that have bedeviled our two faiths: not by ignoring them, but by addressing them; not by blurring our differences, but by celebrating them. ▀



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Dovetail's mission is to provide a channel of communication for interfaith couples, their parents, and their children. No matter what their specific choices regarding faith in their home and children, the more interfaith families can share their ideas, experiences, resources, and support, the more they can make peace in their homes and communities. Jewish and Christian perspectives can dovetail.

Believing that there are no definitive answers to the questions facing interfaith families, **Dovetail** strives to be open to all ideas and opinions. Editorial content attempts to balance and respect the perspectives of both Jewish and Christian partners in interfaith marriages, as well as the diverse perspectives of parents and children of interfaith couples. Inclusion in **Dovetail** does not imply endorsement. **Dovetail** accepts a thoughtful and constructive discussion of all related issues in the Letters to the Editor section, and reserves the right to reply.

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Dovetail welcomes article submissions (query or completed manuscript), letters to the editor, and comments or suggestions. Send to Joan C. Hawhurst, Editor, at the above address. We look forward to hearing from you.

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Spring in an Interfaith Family: Tension or Teaching

by Joan C. Hawhurst

The transition months between winter and spring are a time of waiting, of expecting, of looking forward to green grass and fragrant flowers. This time is itself an exciting and meaningful period in our interfaith family. My husband is Jewish and I am Christian. This season, we celebrate first a round of gaily festive holidays, including the pre-Lenten Mardi Gras free-for-all on Shrove Tuesday and the Jewish holiday of Purim. These raucous celebrations are followed closely this year by the much more solemn and reflective time of Holy Week and Easter, and intersecting with Passover.

Tension

When holidays overlap or follow closely in an interfaith family, there can be confusion but we've always tried to make it a time for learning and growth. As we honor each of our traditions, Jewish and Christian families discover both fascinating connections and uncomfortable tensions. For both Mardi Gras and Purim, we don masks and costumes, indulge in feasting and partying, with lots of noise and silliness. Each of our traditions gives us an outlet to express our joy and merriment. Yet we are always mindful of the solemn reasons underlying both of these celebrations. The original point of eating pancakes on Shrove Tuesday was to use up the last of the lard before replicating Jesus' forty difficult days in the desert. And while we cheer for Queen Esther and boo the evil Haman on Purim, what we're really celebrating is one small victory of the Jewish people over persecution. Our four-year-old daughter doesn't understand why there are

no Queen Esther costumes in the Mardi Gras parade, but she does understand that there are serious reasons underlying our festivities.

Soon after the giddy festivities, each of our traditions encourages us to give something up, whether for the forty days of Lent or for the eight days of Passover. This year the first Seder of Passover falls on the evening of Good Friday, so there are special challenges for the dual-faith family—and special rewards. Christians uncomfortable with celebration on that day might consider timing it in the Jewish fashion, from sunset Thursday to sunset Friday. Those still uneasy at eating meat on Good Friday can fashion a vegetarian seder, with matzo balls in tomato broth, for instance, and an entree based on an elegant fish dish. For Easter Sunday this year: matzo brei (matzos soaked in milk or water and egg and fried like pancakes) and colored eggs; have flourless chocolate cake for dessert at dinner. (See page 8 for recipe.)

Teaching

Celebration and solemnity, indulgence and denial are just some of the paradoxes that interfaith families learn to navigate with creativity and humor. Often our children lead the way, finding the links between our faiths. Certainly the twentieth-century similarities between Easter and Passover are not lost on my preschooler: for both holidays, she gets to hunt for treats (dyed eggs and the afikomen), and it's the only time of year in our high-cholesterol family when we get to eat hard-boiled eggs! For my well-adjusted daughter the similarities link us together as one family: This year she asked if we

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1998 Spring Holiday Dates

Shabbat haGadol	
sunset April 3-	
sunset April 4	
Palm Sunday	April 5
Passover	
sunset April 10-	
sunset April 19	
Good Friday	April 10
Easter	April 12

could have the Passover seder at the home of her aunt who happens to be a Methodist minister.

Despite these comfortable linkages in our interfaith family, the most difficult theological paradox of the year arises around Easter and Passover. In a theological sense, the "Spring Thing" far surpasses the "December Dilemma" in its difficulty of reconciliation for interfaith families. As a Christian, I can easily and honestly join my Jewish partner in his celebration of Passover. The seder happens in our home, and its format is designed to include questions and explanations of our family's understanding of Judaism. This is one of the beauties of a family-based religion like Judaism. And, no matter what your faith background, everyone can get behind the idea of liberation from slavery.

It is much more difficult, theologically and culturally, for my Jewish partner to join me in the celebration of Easter. First, it is a church-based holiday celebration that often seems out of our family's control. Second, the point of the celebration, the resurrection of Jesus, is undeniably outside the realm of Jewish belief and tradition. When my Jewish husband agrees to accompany me to church on Easter Sunday, it is often with trepidation and guilt, magnified by the centuries-old association for Jews of Easter with pogroms and persecution, blood-libel and bloodshed. And these feelings have been reinforced in the sanctuary. Many an interfaith couple, ourselves included, has a story of making a well-intentioned trip to Easter Sunday services, only to be greeted with sermons that blame

Jews for Jesus's crucifixion or exclude from salvation anyone who does not believe in the actual physical resurrection of Jesus. Of course, for every such sermon there is also a message by a more inclusive pastor, who focuses on the potential for rebirth and resurrection in our own lives today. But many Jewish/Christian families have not found a church in which they can hear such an uplifting Easter message.

This is one tension in an interfaith relationship that cannot be resolved. Perhaps we interfaith couples, having chosen to live together with our two distinct religious traditions, will have to accept that this is one of the times when our beliefs cannot overlap, when we can only accept, respect, and celebrate the deep emotions and expectations of our partners for the holidays of their traditions. Perhaps the best we can do is use the tension we feel as fodder for growth and increased understanding.

In this time of visible transition between winter and spring, we are reminded again and again that there is a span of time larger than our own lives. Shrove Tuesday, Purim, Easter, and Passover remind us that we are all part of a historical human chain that stretches back to Moses, Esther, and Jesus. As we wait for the snow to melt and the crocuses to bloom, we have separate but common cause to celebrate gleefully and to reflect with solemnity—together. ▀

Culture and Theology in a Convert's Family

by Katherine H. Baker, Ph.D.

My father was a Methodist minister. I grew up with Easter as THE holiday, the day when our Lord was resurrected and eternal life was assured to all of us. When I was 10, my father died and the association we had between him and the church made it difficult for us to continue actively participating in formal religion except for Christmas and Easter. By the time I went to college I rarely, if ever, went to church or thought much about Christianity.

My husband, brought up in a Reform Jewish household, seemed as unconnected to religion as I was. Intermarriage? No, we said, we were both scientists who were beyond the needs of religion. Now, 25 years and two children later, we are both still scientists ... and both Orthodox Jews.

I have fond memories of Easter dinner at my parents' house. I can still smell the Easter ham and the sweet potatoes (usually with those great—and nonkosher—marshmallows melted on top of the casserole). The table was decorated, not only with flowers but with brightly dyed eggs and with candy, particularly jelly beans. I love jelly beans, particularly the red ones; my sister and I used to fight with each other over them.

Now, after weeks of frantic house-cleaning to make sure that every crumb of hometz has been removed from the house, I sit down to a meal where the central foodstuffs are matzah and bitter herbs. And because of the prohibition against eating (or even owning) hometz during Pesach, I can't eat with my mother and the rest of my family on Easter.

When I was young, I invited the daughter of the local Conservative rabbi to my birthday party. Unfortunately, my birthday is in April and frequently came in the middle of Pesach. Sara would come to the party but she always had to bring her own food. It looked to me as if it didn't taste as good as mine. I can remember teasing her about it, tempting her to have just one chocolate, just one jelly bean, just one piece of cake. Now, of course, I am used to the idea of having a matzah birthday cake.

But this gets us away from the central issue. Without Easter, Christianity makes no sense. Christmas is nice, but more important than Jesus's birthday is the central tenet for Christianity that he rose from the dead on Easter. In the entire time we've been married, my husband has never attended Easter services with my family. Easter for him is a time too closely linked with the age-old condemnation of the Jews as the "Christ killers," with Passion plays and anti-Jewish violence. On the other hand, my mother has never attended a seder at our house. Why go somewhere to eat this strange food and be reminded that her daughter's children do not share her core religious beliefs? It's not like Christmas. At least then we can all get together, exchange gifts, and sing such innocuous carols as "Deck the Halls" and "Jingle Bells."

Unlike Christmas and Hanukkah, Easter and Pesach are still principally religious holidays. The differences between Christianity and Judaism are not as obvious in spring, but they are more profound. ▀

Professor Baker is a microbial ecologist who is active in both the Orthodox and Conservative synagogues in Harrisburg, PA. Though she converted to Judaism some years ago, an ingrained Protestant Ethic ensures that she still polishes silver like a Methodist.

How Christians Should Talk About Jews

Excerpts from God's Mercy Endures Forever: Guidelines on the Presentation of Jews and Judaism in Catholic Preaching
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To order a copy, call 800-235-8722 and ask for publication 247-0.

Holy Week: The Passion Narratives

Because of the tragic history of the "Christ-killer" charge as providing a rallying cry for anti-Semites over the centuries, a strong and careful homiletic stance is necessary to combat its lingering effects today. Homilists [preachers] and catechists [teachers] should seek to provide a proper context for the proclamation of the passion narratives....

It is necessary to remember that the passion narratives do not offer eyewitness accounts or a modern transcript of historical events. Rather, the events have had their meaning focused, as it were, through the four theological "lenses" of the gospels.... These differences also are part of the inspired Word of God.

Certain historical essentials are shared by all four accounts.... Many other elements, such as the crowds shouting "His blood be on us and on our children" in Matthew, or the generic use of the term "the Jews" in John, are unique to a given author and must be understood within the context of that author's overall theological scheme. Often, these unique elements reflect the perceived needs and emphases of the author's particular community at the end of the first century, *after* the split between Jews and Christians was well underway....

Christian reflection on the passion should lead to a deep sense of the need for reconciliation with the Jewish community today. Pope John Paul II has said:

Considering history in the light of the principles of faith in God, we must also reflect on the catastrophic event of the *Shoah* [Holocaust]....

Considering this mystery of the suffering of Israel's children, their witness of hope, of faith, and of humanity under dehumanizing outrages, the Church experiences ever more deeply her common bond with the Jewish people and with their treasure of spiritual riches in the past and in the present. (*Address to Jewish Leadership*, Miami, September 11, 1987)

The Easter Season

The readings of the Easter season ... can leave an impression of collective Jewish responsibility for the crucifixion.... In such cases, the homilist should put before the assembly the teachings of *Nostra Aetate* [papal decree regarding Catholic/Jewish relations] in this regard, ... as well as the fact noted in Acts 3:1 that what was done by some individual Jews was done "out of ignorance" so that no unwarranted conclusion about collective guilt is drawn by the hearers. The Acts may be dealing with a reflection of the Jewish-Christian relationship as it existed toward the end of the first century (when Acts was composed) rather than with the actual attitudes of the post-Easter Jerusalem Church. Homilists should desire to convey the spirit and enthusiasm of the early Church that marks these Easter season readings. But in doing so, statements about Jewish responsibility have to be kept in context. This

is part of the reconciliation between Jews and Christians to which we are all called.

Pastoral Activity during Holy Week and the Easter Season

Pope John Paul II's visit to the Chief Rabbi of Rome on Good Friday, 1987, gives a lead for pastoral activities during Holy Week in local churches. Some dioceses and parishes, for example, have begun traditions such as holding a "Service of Reconciliation" with Jews on Palm Sunday, or inviting Holocaust survivors to address their congregations during Lent.

It is becoming familiar in many parishes and Catholic homes to participate in a Passover Seder during Holy Week. This practice can have educational and spiritual value. It is wrong, however, to "baptize" the Seder by ending it with New Testament readings about the Last Supper or, worse, turn it into a prologue to the Eucharist. Such mergings distort both traditions. The following advice should prove useful:

When Christians celebrate this sacred feast among themselves, the rites of the *haggadah* for the seder should be respected in all their integrity. The seder ... should be celebrated in a dignified manner and with sensitivity to those to whom the seder truly belongs. The primary reason why Christians may celebrate the festival of Passover should be to acknowledge common roots in the history of salvation. Any sense of "restaging" the Last Supper of the

Lord Jesus should be avoided.... The rites of the Triduum are the [Church's] annual memorial of the events of Jesus' dying and rising. (*Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy Newsletter*, March 1980, p. 12)

Seders arranged at or in cooperation with local synagogues are encouraged. ▀

From a message sent by Pope John Paul II to the Patriarchal Diocese of Jerusalem of the Latins, December 9, 1997:

"[I]t must be remembered that Jews and Christians have a common patrimony which binds them spiritually. Both are a blessing to the world, insofar as they commit themselves together so that peace and justice may reign among all men [sic] and all peoples."

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Holidays and Happenings

by Mary Heléne Rosenbaum

Mary Heléne Pottker Rosenbaum is co-author of **Celebrating Our Differences: Living Two Faiths in One Marriage**. She has been published in a number of religious and secular magazines and newspapers. An active member of St. Patrick Catholic Church in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, where she has been a lector for twenty-five years, she has also served as executive director for Congregation Beth Tikvah. She is the associate editor of **Dovetail**.

The Spring Thing

Spring is the oddest season for the Christian/Jewish household. It's also the one when an interfaith family is most likely to be swamped by unexpectedly choppy seas—you've been so busy concentrating on whether To Tree or Not to Tree at Christmas, you've neglected to think about what Joan Hawkhurst so aptly calls The Spring Thing. High tide is Passover, preceded by Purim and followed by some religious ripples not so famous or so widely observed, such as counting the Omer through Lag b'Omer to Shavuot. Meanwhile, the Christian seasonal peak, Easter, has its wake before it in Lent and the mounting crescendo of Holy Week, and its backwash in Trinity and Pentecost.

In my editorial comments on page one of this issue, I concentrated on the problems Jews may find associated with Easter celebrations. But when, as this year, there's a seder designated for Good Friday, the situation may be emotionally sticky for the Christian partner. Even if you've settled the problem of eating meat—either by ending the day at sunset or having some nice salmon steaks—a Christian may still feel uneasy about the celebratory atmosphere. It might be useful here to concentrate on the theologically positive aspects of the day for the Christian—that is, the reason we call it "good"—and recognize that there can be a close relationship between the holiday in which Jews celebrate their freeing from bondage in Egypt and one which Christians believe marks their freeing from the bondage of sin. That understanding can be brought into the explanations to the children, again being careful not to seem to blur or ignore the distinctions between the two faiths.

In our family, I will light a *yahrzeit* [Jewish commemorative] candle for Jesus early on Good Friday. At sunset, we'll have a meatless seder. On Saturday we'll color Easter eggs. Saturday night, the second seder, we'll be guests of friends. Sunday morning will begin with matzo brei, the eggs, and other flourless treats; then it's time for church.

At our church, where our whole family and all guests—Jewish or not—go to Mass on Easter to show solidarity with me, the pastor tactfully passes by our section when sprinkling holy water on the congregation. (My irrepressible husband says, "It would probably come off me as steam.") I wish you clergy as considerate.

Now, for a practical way to combine the two culinary traditions:

Pesadich Pareve Flourless Chocolate Cake

1 c. pareve unsalted margarine
7 oz. unsweetened baking chocolate
1 c. sugar
5 eggs
7 oz. ground almonds

Melt margarine and chocolate, beat in remaining ingredients. Bake in greased egg-shaped pudding mold 40-45 min. at 325° (will still be soft). Unmold when cool, decorate with piped, colored, sweetened, whipped, nondairy cream cheese. 

Portions of this article were excerpted from **Celebrating Our Differences: Living Two Faiths in One Marriage**, by Mary Heléne Rosenbaum and Stanley Ned Rosenbaum; © 1994.

How to Be a Perfect Stranger

A Guide for Passover Seder Guests

Appropriate Attire

- **Men:** Ask your host about attire. Some may prefer jacket and tie; others may request more informal attire. A small head covering called a *yarmulke* (YAHR-mil-kah") or *kippah* (keep-AH") is required at all Orthodox and most conservative and Reconstructionist seders and at some Reform seders. If required, your host will provide them for you.
- **Women:** Ask your host about attire. Some may prefer a dress or a skirt and blouse or a pants suit. Open-toed shoes and modest jewelry are appropriate.

Do not openly wear symbols of other faiths, such as a cross. There are no rules regarding colors of clothing, but this is a festive occasion.

The Ceremony

The Passover *seder* ("SAY-dihr") is a festive dinner at home at which the story of the Jewish people's liberation from slavery in Egypt, the Exodus, is told. Rituals precede and follow the meal. A seder is usually led by the head of the household, although everyone present participates.

Seders (including the meal) may take from 90 minutes to more than three hours, depending upon the detail in which the story is told and family customs. It is customary to arrive at the time called; this is a dinner, as well as a religious celebration.

What are the major ritual objects of the ceremony? • A *seder plate*, on which are symbols of various aspects of the Passover story.

- *Matzah* ("MAH-tzah"), or flat, unleavened bread, similar to the bread made by the Jewish people as they fled Egypt.
- **What books are used?** A *haggadah* (hah-GAH-dah"), a text in Hebrew and English which tells the Passover story and its meaning for each generation. There are hundreds of different versions of the haggadah. Many focus on different elements of the holiday or interpret it from their own particular perspective, such as feminism or ecology, but all tell the basic story of the Exodus.
- **Will a guest who is not Jewish be expected to do anything other than sit?** If asked to do so by the leader, they should read aloud English portions of the haggadah.
- **Are there any parts of the ceremony in which a non-Jewish guest should not participate?** No.

Eating and Drinking

- **Is a meal part of the celebration?** Yes. It is usually served after the first part of the ritual portion of the seder.
- **Will there be alcoholic beverages?** Wine is an integral part of the seder. Other alcoholic beverages may be served prior to or after the seder, depending upon the family's customs.
- **Would it be considered impolite not to eat?** Yes, since the meal is central to the celebration.
- **Is there a grace or benediction before eating or drinking?** Yes. This is called a *birkat hamazon* ("beer-KAHT hah-mah-ZONE").
- **Listen to the seder leader for instructions.** □

Excerpt from How to Be a Perfect Stranger, Vol. 1: A Guide to Etiquette in Other People's Religious Ceremonies © 1996 by Jewish Lights Publishing. Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1996. \$24.95 + \$3.50 s/h. Order by mail or call 800-962-4544. Permission granted by Jewish Lights Publishing, P.O. Box 237, Woodstock VT 05091.

Kids' Page

by Debi Tenner

Debi Tenner is the mother of two and teaches the Sunday School class for older children in the New Haven, Connecticut, interfaith group. She currently works in the local public school system and has been a summer camp educator for the Congregational Churches of Connecticut.

The Blessings of Passover and Easter

Passover and Easter include such wonderful traditions, stories, and rituals as you might find in December without all the hoopla and commercialism: the real meanings of what it means to be child of God.

Real People—Faith Heroes

Read the stories of Passover and Easter and tell your children to listen for the real people in the stories. The Passover story is about baby Moses barely escaping death, later growing up as a prince, a Hebrew without any link to his God, a stutterer who was asked by God to be God's mouthpiece to the Pharaoh.

The Easter story to me has always had two heroes—Jesus and his sacrifice, and Mary. Read the story and ask your children how Mary felt, raising a baby boy who loved God and loved learning and teaching, watching her son challenging people to think and act morally, watching her son be sentenced and die, and then returning to find his tomb empty. Mary is truly the hero of our “everyday” experiences. Through it all she keeps her faith.

What about the Miracles

Are the stories of the Red Sea and the plagues, the miracles performed by Jesus and the Resurrection story, a problem for you to explain? They are for me. My favorite counterattack on this problem is to talk about kids' favorite stories of today. Jurassic Park is a great example: we don't know what dinosaurs looked like but we know they were here and what effect they had on our planet. Did the Pharaoh make a moral and just decision? Did Jesus's death provide a new joy for his disciples and for

our families? What are the faith and the storytelling during these two beautiful holidays really all about?

Lights, Camera, Action

Start with a fact chart. List all the people you can think of in the Passover and/or the Easter story along the left side of a large piece of paper. For each person on your chart, list answers to what, where, when, how, why. What are their motives, their stories, their decisions?

Let your kids choose to “be” their favorite character, and you play the on-the-spot TV interviewer. (Older children get the hang of this quickly and will take over the interviewer role if you let them.) For Passover, interview the prophet Elijah and ask him why he stops in to each Passover Seder. Ask Pharaoh why it took him so long to let the slaves go. For Easter, ask the disciples standing at the empty tomb what they think about the fact that their teacher and Messiah has died.

Use a video cam or tape recorder to record the interviews or put together a skit for the family for the holidays. (Hint: costuming is mostly bathrobes and hand towels wrapped around heads). For younger children, dressing up and using snapshots (Polaroid works great!) and putting the pictures together into a story-book is fun. They might like to do all the plagues, or be Moses parting the Red Sea. They could roll the huge stone away from the tomb on Easter morning and find it empty.

Don't forget the action part! Act out your faith by donating time, energy, or gifts to charity. These are lessons your kids will never forget. ▀

Pesach and Pascha

An Annual Reminder of the Link between Judaism and Orthodox Christianity

by Fr. Theodore Pulcini

Every two years I teach a course in Eastern Orthodox Christianity at Dickinson College, mostly for our students in the Russian Department, who correctly discern that the Russian soul cannot be understood apart from the Orthodox ethos, but also for a smattering of others who—intrigued by those mysterious, lesser-known Christians of the world (even though there are some 250 million of them!)—want to understand better who the Orthodox are and what they believe and practice. It is always a daunting task for me. Usually these students come into the course knowing little more about Orthodox Christians than that they run great ethnic food festivals and usually celebrate Easter on a different date from “normal” Christians. But I am grateful for even such small pedagogical footholds, especially since the latter fact—the Orthodox date of Easter—can provide a glimpse into the inherent connection between Judaism and Orthodox Christianity.

Without going into all of the calendrical complexities that cause the Eastern Orthodox and Western Christian dates of Easter to differ, let me focus on just one. In the first two Christian centuries, churches in various locales set the celebration of Easter by different methods. Some celebrated it on the very day of Passover, no matter what day of the week it was; others, on the Sunday after Passover. It was not until the First Ecumenical Council, convened at Nicea in 325, that some uniformity was achieved: the annual commemoration of the Resurrection of Christ was to be held on the first Sunday following the first full moon after the vernal equinox.

This determination was linked to the Jewish Passover because at the time of Jesus, Pesach was observed at the first full moon after the vernal equinox. (The method of setting the date of Pesach changed somewhat in the third century, but the Fathers at Nicea based their deliberations on the older practice.) In short, it was the intention of the Council Fathers to celebrate Easter at about the time of Passover, but always *after* the Jewish festival in order to recall the New Testament chronology, according to which Christ rose after Passover. (If, in fact, the first full moon after the vernal equinox—and therefore Pesach—fell on Sunday, the Christian festival was to occur on the next Sunday, not on the same day.)

The Orthodox have always kept this link with the date of Pesach in their determination of the date of their Easter. Eastern and Western Christians agree on the method of determining the date up to a point: both require that Easter be on the first Sunday following the first full moon after the vernal equinox. But the Orthodox, holding to the intention of the Nicene Fathers, add one further stipulation: *that Easter always be after Passover*. Much to the perplexity of the pious Orthodox believer, Western Easter sometimes falls before Pesach; Orthodox Easter never does. Most Orthodox, even those with the most rudimentary knowledge of their tradition, can tell you this. In the mind of the Orthodox Christian, Easter is inherently linked to Passover. It is an annual reminder of the Jewish moorings of the Orthodox “Feast of Feasts.”

There are other ways, too, in which Orthodox Easter’s link to Passover is

Dr. Theodore Pulcini, an Orthodox priest, is professor of religion at Dickinson College, where he teaches courses in Bible, early Christianity, Eastern Orthodox Christianity, and Islam. He is currently serving as coordinator of Dickinson’s Judaic Studies Program.

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Barbara Fishbein, M.A.

1-800-313-5251

Barbara is a doctoral student at the Fielding Institute in Santa Barbara, California, doing dissertation research on family relationships and interfaith marriage. You can reach her directly between 8 and 10 p.m. EST, or leave your name and address at any time.

More on the date of Easter:

It should be noted that another complexity comes into play here. Western Christians, in setting the date of Easter, use the first full moon after the real astronomical equinox; the Orthodox, adhering strictly to the method established by the Council of Nicea, use the first full moon after the vernal equinox according to the Julian calendar, the calendar which was in use at the time of the council and is now thirteen days off. If the first full moon after the astronomical vernal equinox falls within the thirteen days before the day of the vernal equinox according to the Julian calendar, Orthodox have to wait until the next full moon. This explains why Orthodox Pascha sometimes falls as many as five weeks after the Western Easter. To complicate matters even further, the date of Passover used by the Orthodox in determining the date of Pascha is, as noted earlier, not necessarily the date of Passover as set by contemporary Jewish practice.

underscored. Most noteworthy is the proper Orthodox name for the festival. Orthodox do not use the term "Easter," which is of pagan origin, probably deriving from *Eostur*, the Norse word for spring. Rather, Orthodox refer to the festival only as *Pascha*, which is simply the Greek rendering of the Hebrew word *Pesach*, i.e., Passover. For the Orthodox, Easter is none other than the Christian Passover, based on the Jewish festival and reinterpreted to celebrate the "passing over" of Christ from death to life. Orthodox liturgical texts make this clear, often distinguishing between the "Mosaic Passover" and the Passover of Christ. Consider the following text, for example, sung at the Resurrection Matins:

Today a sacred Passover (*Pascha*) has dawned for us; a new and holy Passover, a mystical Passover, an all-venerable Passover, a Passover which is Christ the Redeemer, a spotless Passover, a great Passover, a Passover of the faithful, a Passover which has opened to us the gates of Paradise, a Passover which sanctifies all the faithful!

Then there are folk practices by which Pascha is celebrated among the Orthodox, practices that call to mind the Jewish roots of the festival. For example, Orthodox in the Mediterranean world tend to center their sumptuous Paschal meal on roasted lamb to recall the Passover lamb sacrificed in ancient Jewish practice and, more specifically, Christ as the "Lamb of God," sacrificed on the cross. Most Orthodox also consume a specially prepared bread on their Passover. Unlike the *matzah* of the Seder, however, the bread of

the Paschal meal, usually heavily enriched with butter and eggs, is always leavened to underscore the "rising" which is being celebrated.

Moreover, the Seder plate always includes a hard-boiled egg to symbolize new life. Symbolism of a similar sort is found in the Orthodox Paschal celebration, which features hard-boiled eggs, sometimes dyed red to recall the blood of Christ and sometimes (especially among the Slavs) decorated with intricate designs to highlight the joyous nature of the day. A folk custom among most Orthodox is to have an "egg-cracking competition" at the Paschal dinner table. Everyone chooses an egg and then taps his or her egg against that of others at the table; the one whose egg remains uncracked at the end of the contest is the winner. The cracking of the egg, of course, is taken to symbolize the "breaking forth" of new life from the tomb of Christ.

In 1977 I had the good fortune to be in Jerusalem for Pascha. It was one of those infrequent years when the Orthodox and Western Paschal dates coincide. A few days after Pascha, I was speaking with an Orthodox believer near Jaffa Gate in the Old City. As a cluster of Hasidim on their way to the Western Wall passed us, the man remarked, "It is ironic, is it not, that the very feast that most clearly differentiates us from the Jews—Pascha, the Resurrection of Christ—is also the feast that most strongly links us to them. Our Pascha is the child of their Pesach. At this time of year I always recall that." It is a fact that Orthodox would do well to recall every year at their celebration of Pascha, the Christian Passover. □

Siddur Mikor-Hayyim

by Rabbi Henry N. Shreibman

Review by Jennifer C. Patterson

When I received my copy of *Siddur Mikor-Hayyim* in the mail to review, I wasn't sure what I had gotten myself into by agreeing to write about this book. I had never read such a text in my life, let alone reviewed one. After all, my last experience with a workbook devoted to prayer and tradition was years ago, in an elementary school text in my Methodist Sunday School. I suspected that I might be in over my head.

However, once I began to read, a wonderful thing happened for me. Rabbi Shreibman's book opened up a world of prayer that I had never known, and I learned more about the practice of prayer than I had known was possible. I don't think that it was the unfamiliarity of prayers themselves that attracted me, but Shreibman's way of explaining traditional Jewish prayers and turning them into an active, joyful practice.

Shreibman's book is a siddur written for Brandeis Hillel Day School in California. It is intended to provide the children who study it with an understanding of prayer, including its structure and order.

The book accomplishes this through a series of lessons, organized with statements and thought questions, kavanot that explain each prayer, and the prayer itself, written in both Hebrew and English for both easy understanding and continuity with tradition. I found each lesson to stand alone successfully, but they also draw upon one another enticingly, encouraging the reader to proceed on, learning more and more about the practice of prayer.

The *kavanot* (intentions) were especially helpful in understanding the context of the prayer and encouraging the reader to think further. In one kavanah, the student is encouraged to learn more about acrostics as a part of prayer and is challenged to complete an alphabet-based prayer or construct a new one based on a name. Another speaks of the importance of Jerusalem to the Jewish people, and still another sparks thought about miracles. Through these instructional *kavanot*, the students are encouraged to learn more about the prayer, to think about its meaning, and even to feel the experience of prayer with their whole bodies and beings.

It is a tribute to Rabbi Shreibman that he has been able to take a difficult subject such as prayer, one that is laden with tradition yet unique and personal to each human being, and introduce it in a way that is appropriate for children, parents, newcomers, and those of all varieties of Jewish background. The practice of prayer is often quite appropriately taken as a subject that deserves great seriousness and thoughtfulness. To this, Shreibman has added an experience of joy and involvement that makes the practice of prayer irresistible. ▀

*Editor's note: Rabbi Shreibman, using **Siddur Mikor Hayyim**, will conduct the Saturday morning liturgy at the Dovetail Institute conference in April. The book may be ordered by phone or fax at 415-491-4000, or write to: 12 Unionstone Drive, San Rafael CA 94903.*

Jennifer Patterson is registrar at the University of Dayton School of Law.

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Interfaith Support Around the Nation

To be listed as a contact person for a new or existing group, or to indicate that you are seeking to join or form a group, please send information to:

Dan Josephs
1175 S. Euclid Avenue, Oak Park IL 60304
Home phone: (708) 660-9503
Fax: (630) 574-8089
E-Mail: JosephsDA@aol.com

Dan is one of the founders and coordinators of the Chicago Jewish-Catholic Couples' Group. We look forward to hearing from you.

PLEASE NOTE: **Dovetail** does not interview or endorse any entry listed here.

Arizona, Phoenix area*

Interested in joining an interfaith group.
Contact: Warren Nechtman
(602) 980-4484

California, San Francisco Bay Area*

Existing interfaith group.
Contact: Alicia Torre
(415) 591-9434

California, San Francisco Bay Area*

Interfaith Connection
Groups for interfaith couples.
Contact: Rosanne Levitt, Director
(415) 292-1252

Colorado, Denver*

Interested in forming an interfaith group.
Contact: Karen McCarthy and Dan Kowal
(303) 439-7750

Connecticut, New Haven*

Existing interfaith group.
Contact: Christina Giebisch-Mohrer
(203) 287-9110

District of Columbia, Greater Washington *

Interfaith Families Project
Existing interfaith group.
Contact: Laura Steinberg
(301) 589-9280

District of Columbia, Greater Washington

Bethesda Jewish Congregation
Jewish congregation welcomes interfaith families.
Contact: Maran Beth Gluckstein, Exec. Director
(301) 469-8636

Illinois, Chicago metropolitan area*

Jewish-Catholic Couples Dialogue Group
Existing interfaith group.
Contact: Abbe and Dan Josephs
(708) 660-9503
or Patty and David Kovacs (773) 275-5689

Kentucky, Louisville*

Interested in forming an interfaith group.
Contact: Carolyn Humphrey & Fred Gross
(502) 423-8583

Louisiana, New Orleans

Outreach programs on interfaith issues.
Contact: Courtney Nathan, Jewish Family Service, (504) 831-8475

Maryland, Baltimore

Jewish Outreach Network Programs
Groups, workshops, and counseling for interfaith families, parents, and converts, including interfaith discussion support group.
Contact: Beth Land Hecht, Director
(410) 466-9200, ext. 381

Maryland, Rockville

Interfaith Outreach Program, JCC of Greater Washington, DC
Introduces interfaith families to Jewish life and offers workshops, classes, and programs dealing with interfaith issues.
Contact: Lisa Shapero, Director
(301) 881-0100, ext. 6782

Massachusetts, Amherst*

Existing interfaith group.
Contact: Janet Lehan Bloom
(413) 253-3685

Massachusetts, Boston*

Developing a network of interfaith families.
Contact: Adina Davidson and Joel Nitzberg
(617) 776-3235

Michigan, Huntington Woods

Group called "Celebrating Differences"
Contact: Miriam S. Jerris, Jewish Humanist leader, (800) 696-0380

Minnesota, Minneapolis*

Twin Cities Support Group
Existing interfaith group.
Contact: Joan Cleary and Jerry Helfand
(612) 698-7987

New Jersey, Hasbrouck Heights

Temple Beth Elohim
Congregation welcomes Jews and non-Jews.
Contact: Rabbi Fredric S. Dworkin
(201) 744-3304

New Jersey, South Jersey/Philadelphia area*

Bifaithful Families & Children Network
Group currently not active.
Contact: Miriam Gilbert, (609) 753-1173

* denotes a group not sponsored by a religious institution.

New Jersey, Whippany

United Jewish Federation
Interfaith families educational program and support/discussion groups.
Contact: Lynne Wolfe (973) 884-4800 ext. 192

New York, Long Island

Long Island Havurah (Fellowship) for Humanistic Judaism
Existing group stresses intercultural strengths.
Contact: Leonard Cherlin, (516) 889-8337

New York, New York

Temple of Universal Judaism
Participation is open to all.
Contact: Rabbi Charles Lippman
(212) 535-0187

New York, Rochester

Interfaith Connection, Jewish Family Service
Contact: Michele Ruda Leve, C.S.W.
(716) 461-2000, ext. 825

New York, Rockland County*

Interested in forming an interfaith group.
Contact: Eric and Elizabeth Kohlmeier
(914) 639-9380

Ohio, Cincinnati*

Interested in joining an interfaith group.
Contact: Christine M. Segal, (513) 793-2866

Ohio, Columbus

Gateways: The Jewish Interfaith Connection
Groups and programs for grandparents, parents, interfaith couples, and families.
Contact: Nancy Heiden, Project Director
(614) 231-2731

Ohio, Dayton

Jewish Interfaith Network
Interfaith group.
Contact: Tonda Learner, (937) 439-4313

Pennsylvania, Philadelphia Area

Jewish Converts & Interfaith Network
Support groups for grandparents, parents, interfaith couples, converts, and children.
Contact: Lena Romanoff, Director
(610) 664-8112

Tennessee, Memphis*

Interfaith group.
Contact: Jan and David Kaplan
(901) 767-4267

Wisconsin, Milwaukee

Interfaith Connection, JCC of Milwaukee
Existing interfaith group.
Contact: Joyce Gutzke, Interfaith Coordinator
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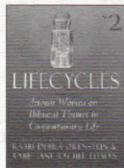
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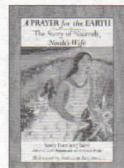
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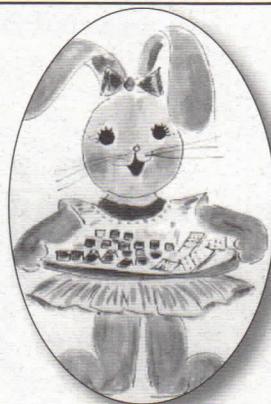
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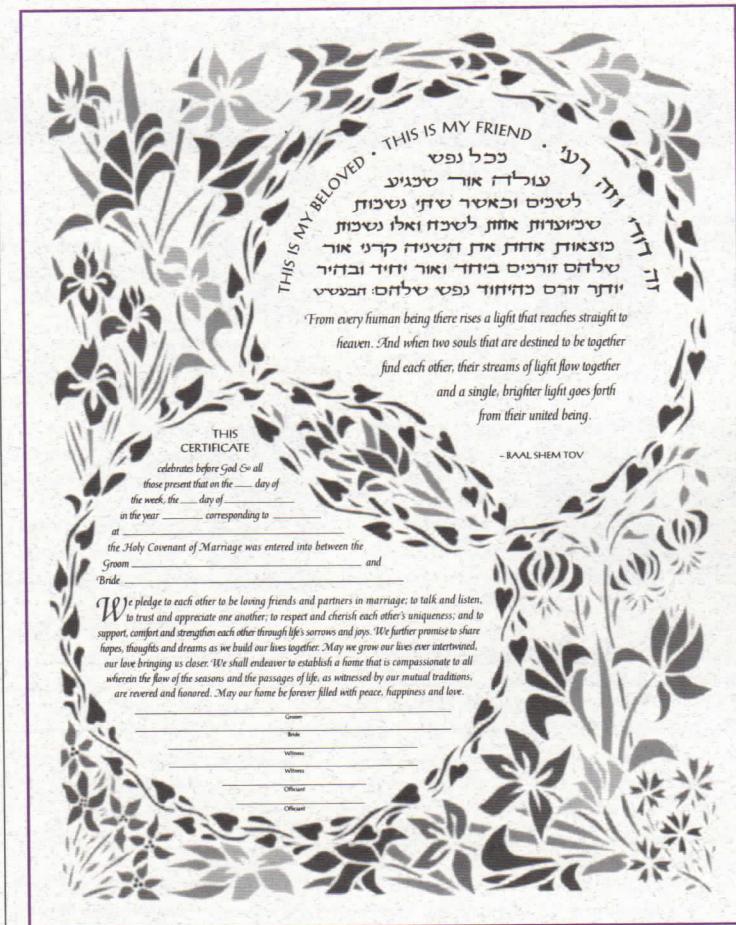
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