

President's Message April 2014

Mitzvah is a word that is often used by Jews. Our temple requires our b'nai mitzvah students to each participate in a "Mitzvah Project." I ask, what does "mitzvah" mean and, with the upcoming holiday of Passover, how can one perform a mitzvah?

Mitzvah, in its primary meaning, refers to the commandments given in the Torah. However, we more commonly think of mitzvah as an act of human kindness. Our kids' mitzvah projects have included volunteering at local food pantries and at homeless and animal shelters, raising awareness and funds for life threatening diseases, supporting Israeli soldiers, and assisting families in need within the community where we reside or in places as far away as Africa. In addition to participating in community service projects in their hometowns or through their employment, our adult members perform mitzvahs in our Jewish community by serving on temple committees, volunteering at PTO events, and reading Torah at the High Holidays. Our contributions of time, money, and good deeds, have us walking away feeling good.

With the exception of our annual Sunday School Model Seder, Passover is not typically celebrated or commemorated at temple like other Jewish holidays. The Seder takes place in the family home. It is customary, and indeed a mitzvah, to invite guests, including strangers, to attend a Seder. Many interfaith families may not host a Seder; some may feel they lack the ability to lead one and others may physically not feel up to the task to prepare for Passover and the Seder. The ideal mitzvah would be to ask a fellow congregant if they have a Seder to attend this year and, if they do not, to invite them to join your family Seder, to together recount the story of Moses, and to enjoy the festive meal together.

My family's most memorable Seders have been those where additional chairs (and sometimes tables) have been dragged into the dining room, where we must squish together and share Haggadahs. Please let me know if you have no plans to attend a Seder this Passover or if you have room at your Seder table for an extra chair or two.

Wishing everyone memorable Passover Seders and a happy Pesach. Chag Sameach.

Mo Bauer