



PARK SLOPE E-News

February 26, 2017

What's Happening in Park Slope Chapter



Rosh Chodesh - A Women's Holiday

by Cecelia Kramer

Entering Bracha and Shloima Melzer's home on the evening of January 12, most of us knew very little about the monthly holiday of Rosh Chodesh. In the dining room, Bracha had recreated the special atmosphere and celebration she has experienced since her childhood in Dublin.



Twin heirloom candlesticks, dating to her mother's hope chest, were on the table. Tea lights, symbolizing special bon fires of ancient times, floated in a round bowl of colored water. From the time of the First Temple successive bonfires all over Jerusalem were lit after the Sanhedrin determined that the new moon had been correctly sighted by witnesses.

Although activities centered around the lunar cycle, there was no fixed calendar until the fourth century CE, and days for religious and secular activities needed to be determined by the Sanhedrin. Hillel II finalized the lunisolar Hebrew calendar. Its years are solar; its months are lunar.

Textual references to Rosh Chodesh date back to Genesis, and there are Rosh Chodesh prayers for synagogue. But it has always been a woman's holiday, when all or part of their work stops. According to tradition, this is because, having more faith than men that Moses would return, women refused to contribute their gold jewelry to be melted down for the statue of Baal. Although each family or community developed individual ways to celebrate, women light candles, serve a special meal, and have relief from work. Bracha showed us the white tablecloth embroidered with blue flowers her mother used only on Rosh Chodesh, signifying to the family that this was a special day.

Branches of Bracha's family came from Lithuania and Russia to settle in Great Britain around 1883. Their diasporic stories were mesmerizing, especially being recounted in her Irish lilt. A paternal great grandfather, conscripted into the Russian army, (which for a Jewish boy was for twenty five years) escaped by cutting the harness of his horse and swimming under freezing river waters to Germany. There, he was sent by the German army to fight in the Boer War. In South Africa he and two friends came upon three Jewish girls. They ended up married and settled in Manchester. He also ended up speaking seven languages.



Treat yourself to a Happy Birthday/Anniversary

Let's remember ourselves! Our chapter has a wonderful new program, where for an \$18 tax deductible donation, we will send you a birthday card and/or anniversary card.

More...

What's Happening!

March 1, 2017 - at 6:30 pm
- [Winter Book Club- Marriage of Opposites](#)

March 30, 2017 at 6:30 pm-
[Let's Move with Dr. Louis Ezrick](#)

April 26, 2017 at 6:30 pm -
[Spring Book Club with the Author - the Wed-Locked Agunot with Susan Aranoff](#)

June 1, 2017 at 7 pm -
Champagne & Dessert Garden Picnic - new member event

August 8 - at 6:30 pm -
Beach Book Club - Jews, Quakers and the Holocaust

September 14, 2017 at 6:30 pm -
"Raise Catholic Now I'm Jewish" - a discussion with Rabbi Mira Rivera

October 19, 2017 at 6:30 pm - Fall Book Club - "My Fifteen Grandmothers" by Genie Milgrom

If you missed this event, there will be more. Our Hadassah chapter includes members born in India, Burma, and Eastern Europe. Our events explore the Sephardic and Ashkenazie traditions of our members as well as celebrate our holidays.

Chinese New Year's Dinner With Ruth And Dan Shapiro

In the cartoons of our childhood, characters, practically levitating, followed curlicues of cooking aromas to an unseen kitchen. Entering Ruth and Danny Shapiro's home on January 27th, we did the same.



Ruth was preparing an auctioned Chinese New Year banquet.

Duplexed bamboo steamers, a restaurant sized wok, and two huge soup pots were on the stove. Beneath the burners the oven blazed. Shades and shapes of green were on the counters, waiting to be filled, sauteed or chopped.

After saying Hello, we passed back by the long dining room table set with blue and white Chinese porcelain, and sat in the living room where Ruth had placed treats like her sweet five spice walnuts. Soon we were seated around the table; homemade shumai, gyoza, lettuce wraps, Peking duck, and aromatic soups fragrant with sesame were served in succession. The traditional orange slices came at the end. (In case we were still starving, there was also frozen green tea ice cream and water chestnut pie.)

Conversation went on hours after the after the last sip of tea. We found out how each of the couples had met; how they had known almost immediately that *this was the one*. Family stories of love and rare coincidence were told. And, most amazingly, as a complete break from the past year, never once did anyone mention the elections.

If you weren't with us at this dinner, you'll have an opportunity to bid on other ones in the future, and we hope you will!

Thanks to Cecelia Kramer for writing these articles!

November 7 and 14, 2017 -
2-4:30 pm - Learn Mah
Jongg - (2 consecutive
classes; limit 12)


We hope you will look through each event, save the date, and join us as we have so many interesting happenings in our chapter.



Endless Beginnings necklace

For a gift of \$150* in support of groundbreaking medical research at Hadassah Medical Organization, you can receive this lovely sterling silver necklace edged with cubic zirconias. It is inscribed with the famous quote from Hadassah's founder, Henrietta Szold, **"There is no ending that is not a beginning."**

More...

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