

Dear Beth Am Family,

In the Jewish calendar, this shabbat is referred to as Shabbat Ha-Gadol (The Great Shabbat). Some of us might find this quite ironic for this Shabbat seems about as far away from the traditional "Great" holidays (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur) as it can get. And yet, regardless of its distance from the High Holy Days, this shabbat is called Shabbat Ha-Gadol.

The sages deemed this sabbath Shabbat Ha-Gadol because it is the shabbat which precedes the 1st of Nisan. The importance of Nisan is presented in the Book of Exodus. It states that the 1st of Nisan is the beginning of the year. The Torah marks Nisan as the 1st month because in Nisan we are freed from Egypt and become a people. Before this point, we, as "Children of Israel," were only a tribe. At the moment we are freed and we begin our journey to the "Promised Land," we become a nation. Therefore, to mark this moment, the Torah states that the 1st of Nisan shall be called the head of the year and the 15th of Nisan (the day we are freed) shall have great celebration. This great celebration is known as Passover.

The Jewish calendar gives us an "advance notice" of almost three weeks. If the grocery store shelves filling with Passover Matza and jelly rings wasn't enough of a hint, the Jewish calendar is there for us to say, "Uh, Passover is almost here." I think it is especially important to have this kind of a "wake-up" call because of the importance of Passover. Passover represents a time for us to be aware of our enslavements and how we at times become bound to our "masters" like money, pride, greed, and selfishness. Because of Passover's significance, we need time to prepare. Yes, we need to buy the foods, but we also need to prepare our souls.

I also think there is the mundane matter of making plans for the holiday. Some of us plan to host the Seder while some of us plan to go to some one else's Seder. Some plan to be with just the close family, while others look to invite everyone to their house. Regardless of your plans, I would ask you to consider spending some time with your Beth Am family.

There are two night's of Seder and all too often we desire to "forget" about the second night because of the hassle. Well, let us take care of the hassle. Let us take care of the leading. Let us take care of the wine. On the 2nd night of Passover, Beth Am is again hosting a 2nd night Seder for you and your friends. It is open to Temple and non-Temple Members to allow of you to relax and enjoy the spirit of Passover without all the fuss. This year, Zoe Gevanthor has enabled us to have the Seder at Ceola Manor where the ambiance should be amazing. Kids and Adults of all ages are invited to attend. The cantor and I try our best to make it as engaging as possible for all our attendees.

Please consider, during your days of planning, attending our 2nd night Seder. Arrangements can be made

through Zoe at zgevanthor@templebetham-ny.org.

B'shalom,

Rabbi Robert Weiner