

## Why is this year different from all other years?

Pesach is only a few weeks away, and many of us are thinking about what needs to be done to prepare for the Seder. Not the least among the Seder details is who should be invited to the Seder. In the spirit of '2 for Seder', a worldwide program created to honour the memory of Joyce Fienberg z"l, a former Holy Blossom congregant who was murdered in the 2018 Tree of Life shooting in Pittsburgh, we are encouraging Holy Blossom members to invite people who are not Jewish to their Seder. When asked, non-Jews who stand up to antisemitic ideologies overwhelmingly shared that it was their relationships with Jewish friends which motivated their convictions. In this way, everyone takes a small powerful step to fight back against hate and indifference that causes antisemitism.

Chag Sameach to all!

### Phyllis Segal Denaburg

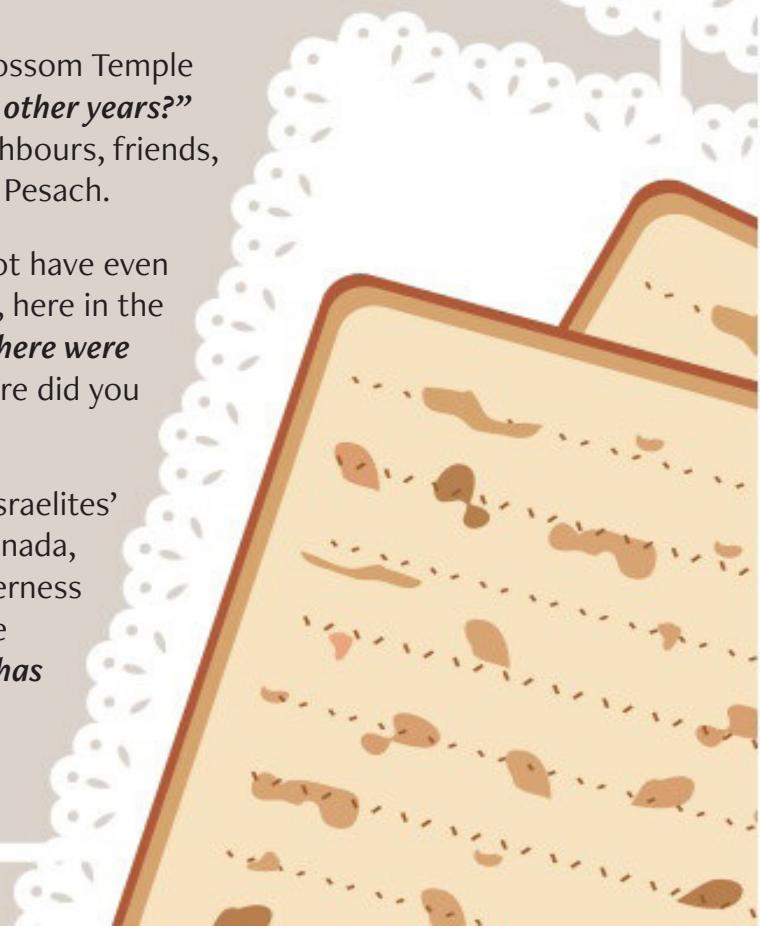
President, Holy Blossom Temple

On the night of Seder, there are 4 traditional questions. Each of them is meant to help us see ourselves in this ancient tale, by demonstrating that 'this night is different from all other nights.' This year, Pesach 5784/2024, the lesson is especially poignant. The world has changed for the Jewish community after October 7th and antisemitism is more virulent in Canada today than since the darkest days of World War II.

Please use these 4 questions, crafted by the Holy Blossom Temple Clergy, to explore "***Why is this year different than all other years?***" around your Seder table. This year, may we, our neighbours, friends, and family all share and learn this timeless lesson of Pesach.

**Question One: Matzah.** The Ancient Israelites did not have even enough time for their bread to rise. On October 7th, here in the diaspora, we too felt that breathless lack of time. ***Where were you on October 7th and what do you remember?*** Where did you go? Who did you call?

**Question Two: Maror.** The bitter herb, the ancient Israelites' lives were made bitter by the Egyptians. Today, in Canada, we too are experiencing terrible bitterness. The bitterness of the Israeli hostages, the bitterness of war, and the bitterness of growing antisemitism. ***Where and how has this bitterness touched your life?***



**Question Three: Vegetables, Dipped Twice.** Our rabbinic ancestors celebrated the luxury of freedom with paradox. They dipped their food, a custom representing extravagance, in salted water, a symbol of generational tears and oppression. Even at the best of times, they never forgot what their own ancestors went through. *What parallels do you see, both positive and negative, between our generation and previous generations of Jews?*

**Question Four: Reclining.** In the days when the Haggadah was written, reclining while eating was understood as a chance to display comfort, relaxation, and trust in those around you. An extravagance something which only a free person enjoyed. Today, in Canada, many Jews are not sure we can relax. Some of us have found that long held trusts are eroded while others have found new places where we feel safe enough to ‘recline.’ *Who, and what, has been your place for comfort since October 7th? Where are you no longer comfortable?*

It is often a Rabbinic custom to offer a *Nechemta*, a ‘word of hope’ to close a discussion, a teaching, or a sermon. Tonight, our *Nechemta* is the Seder itself; our people’s sacred ritual of freedom and redemption, this ancient story which includes each of ours, told “b’chol dor vador”, in every generation.

This year we are slaves; next year may we be free.  
This year we are here, next year in Jerusalem.

From our table to yours, Chag Sameach!

Rabbi Yael Splansky  
Cantor David Rosen  
Rabbi Samuel Kaye  
Rabbi Eliza McCarroll  
Cantorial Soloist Lindi Rivers  
Rabbi Taylor Baruchel

