

## LAKE SHORE DRIVE SYNAGOGUE

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**AMALEK, HAMAN, AND AHASUERUS**


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The Shabbat before Purim is called Shabbat Zachor, significant not only because we read Deuteronomy 25:17-19 as the *maftir aliya* from a second *sefer torah*, but because by hearing this maftir one fulfills three of the 613 *mitzvot* of the Torah. The three *mitzvot* are: (1) Always remember what Amalek did (Deut. 25:17), (2) Do not forget the evil done to us by Amalek (Deut. 25:19) and (3) Destroy the seed of Amalek (Deut. 25:19). What does this have to do with Purim? The Midrash tells us that Haman was descended from Amalek, So before Purim, the day on which we read how Haman and his children were actually killed. we read the verses which contains the *mitzvah* to remember to kill out Amalek. Also, verse 9:28 of the Megillah states, "And these days should be remembered and done," so first we remember (by reading *parashat Zachor*), then we do (by reading Megillat Esther). The event of listening to this *maftir* is so important that one is required to bring his child of age 6 and up to listen to this *maftir*. The general custom is that, if possible, women try to come to the synagogue to hear the reading of this *maftir*. In some communities, there is even a separate reading just for women.

So where does the connection of Haman and Amalek come from? After all, the Haftorah of that day, Samuel 15:1-34, contains these verses: 8. And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and **completely destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword**. 9. **But Saul and the people spared Agag**, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not completely destroy them; but everything that was despised and worthless, that they destroyed completely.... 32. Then said Samuel, Bring here to me Agag the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came to him cheerfully. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past. 33. And Samuel said, As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women. And **Samuel cut Agag in pieces** before the Lord in Gilgal. Reading this one would think that all the Amalekites were destroyed in the time of King Saul.

Our first clue is Esther 3:1, in which Haman is introduced as "Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite," thus establishing the connection. The Targum Sheni (an Aramaic translation of the Book of Esther) gives Haman's lineage as follows: "Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, son of Ada, son of Bizna'i, son of Aphlitis, son of Djosos,[a] son of Peros, son of Hamdan, son of Talyon, son of Atnisomos, son of Harum, son of Harsum, son of Shegar, son of Genar, son of Parmashta, son of Vaizatha, son of Agag, son of Sumqar, son of Amalek, son of Eliphaz, son of Esau". (There are apparently several generations omitted between Agag, who was executed by Samuel the prophet in the time of King Saul, and Amalek, who lived several hundred years earlier.)

So how did Agag's son survive Saul's sword? There are lots of *midrashim* about this, including one where Agag's son was disguised as one of the sheep spared in verse 9, and one where in the time elapsed between Agag being spared and the time he was executed he produced an heir. No matter what, our tradition is that Haman is a descendent of Amalek.

Let me close with one more interesting Purim relationship. "The Legend of the Wandering Jew" is a Christian legend based on an exchange between a Jewish shoemaker and Jesus as Jesus went to his crucifixion. In the legend the Jew said, "Go on quicker," Jesus thereupon answering: "I go; but thou shalt wait till I come." This story first appeared in 1228 in a manuscript by Roger of Wendover under the title Of the Jew Joseph. The central figure in that story is named Cartaphilus. However, at least from the 17th century, the name Ahasver has been given to the Wandering Jew, apparently adapted from Ahasuerus, the Persian king in the Book of Esther, who was not a Jew, and whose very name among medieval Jews was an exemplum of a fool. This name may have been chosen because the Book of Esther describes the Jews as a persecuted people, scattered across every province of Ahasuerus' vast empire, similar to the later Jewish diaspora in countries whose state and/or majority religions were forms of Christianity.

## ENVOI

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Little did I know when I started editing/writing this Bulletin in December 1997 that this would be something I would be engaged in for over 23 years. Until recently this was the primary means of communication with the Lake Shore Drive Synagogue community. Today, with the Internet a household staple and our Constant Contact weekly synagogue email, there's no need for an old-fashioned printed-on-glossy-paper snail-mailed synagogue bulletin. And, given that our synagogue has an in-place Rabbi, it should be the Rabbi, and not a layman like me, who imparts to our congregants words of Torah.

In each Bulletin I provided an informative essay on a Judaic topic, an occasional Wry Bread section of Jewish humor, and news about Jewish detective novels in my Shamuses Are Not Shamashim column. My Judaic essays are all available in the Bulletin tab of the synagogue website, lsd70.org, along with a topical table of contents, in case you'd like to access these golden oldies. And here, as I say goodbye, are my last Wry Bread and Shamuses Are Not Shamashim columns.

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### SHAMUSES ARE NOT SHAMASHIM

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The Jew in detective fiction has not gone unnoticed. As far back as 1990 Jon Breen and Martin Greenberg published Synod of Sleuths; Essays on Judeo-Christian Detective Fiction. And in 1998 Malcolm J. Turnbull published Victims or Villains: Jewish Images in Classic English Detective Fiction. In 2004 Laurence Roth published a study entitled Inspecting Jews: American Jewish Detective Stories. Even Amazon now has a category called "Jewish detectives."

In 2019 Nicholas Meyer published a Sherlock Holmes mystery with a Jewish theme, The Adventure of the Peculiar Protocols in which Sherlock tracks down the origin of the infamous *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*. This is not one of Meyer's best, but it gives a bit of insight into the *Protocols*. One of the writers of the Seinfeld TV series, Matt Goldman, has been busy producing a series of books set in Minneapolis featuring detective Nils Shapiro. The books are: Gone to Dust, Broken Ice, The Shallows, and Dead West. I've only read the first of these, found that the only Jewish content was a description of Nils Shapiro's Hebrew school days, and was not taken enough with the protagonist to read the others in the series, despite the pandemic

The 2006 mystery novel The Righteous Men by Sam Bourne deals with the murder of the 36 righteous ones, one by one, and finding the murderer. A recent 2019 novel, 36 Righteous Men, by best-selling author Steven Pressfield, derives its title and some material from the idea of the Lamed Vav Tsadikim that I described in my January 2020 Bulletin. If you are a lover of books with lots of surreal happenings then these books may appeal to you. You will not learn much about Judaism and certainly won't get much out of these books if you are a mystery lover.

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### WRY BREAD

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Some suggestions for how to proceed with the Seder from a collaborative effort of the CDC and the cRc.

1. To maintain social distancing only two people will be allowed to attend at a time. You can sign on for your preferred portion of the seder in 15-minute shifts.
2. The family-style servings of haroset, matzo, maror, and salt water will be replaced by a pre-packaged box of the essential ceremonial items plus a bowl of matzo ball soup.
3. Handwashing will be done every five minutes. The limit of four glasses of wine limit is raised to eight.
4. Due to COVID-19 restrictions in his organization, Elijah will not be able to attend in person, but may be available by Zoom, once he learns how to use it.
5. The Afikomen will be apportioned into separately wrapped pieces, and the search for it will be conducted using gloves and N-95 masks.

## LAKE SHORE DRIVE SYNAGOGUE FAMILY NEWS

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### MAZEL TOV to:

MARION and GEORGE SIEGEL on the marriage of their granddaughter Shifra Siegel to Mordechai Weisenfeld.

מזל טוב!

### SINCEREST WISHES FOR COMPLETE RECOVERY to:

All who have succumbed to COVID-19.

MARLA FERENCZ who underwent surgery.

HELEN RUBINSTEIN who underwent surgery.

רפואה שלמה!

### SINCEREST CONDOLENCES to:

ADELINA PINSLER on the death of her husband, REUVEN PINSLER.

JACKLIN PINSLER and JAY LEVINE on the death of their father, REUVEN PINSLER

LARISA RIVKIS on the death of her husband, LEONID (LEV) RIVKIS.

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

May the Almighty comfort you among the other mourners for Zion and Jerusalem

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### KIDDUSHIM ....CANCELLED DUE TO COVID-19

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### HONORABLE *MENSHEN*

Please forgive me for any errors and omissions. AM

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Lake Shore Drive Synagogue wishes to thank the following for their contributions. In memory of Tsipora Hahamy: **Alan, David, Eytan, and Ron Fozailoff, the Marks family, Iram and Fred McGill.** In memory of Reuven Pinsler: **Lori and Ray Lavin, Henry Winograd.** In memory of Lev Rivkis: **Ruslana Fredman, Alice and Frank Kleinman, Lori and Ray Lavin, Daniel Nack, Henry Winograd.** In memory of Raymond Dayan: **Liliane Dayan, Aimee and Lee Strauss. Morene Dunn and Barry Axler:** in memory of Beatrice Axler and Isadore Dunn. **Tina and Bruce Corson:** in memory of Irvin Corson and Milton Zarensky. **Liliane Dayan:** in memory of Elise Dayan's father. **Rose Dessau:** in memory of David Dessau and Saul Dessau. **Polina Lerner:** in memory of David Darer. **Myrna and Ed Mazur:** in memory of Evelyn Hankin and David Mazur. **Sarah and Vlad Milgram:** in memory of Sofia Bergelson. **Liana and Henry Palacci:** in memory of their father's *yahrzeit*. **Ida and Alexander Urin:** in memory of Elizabet Vahutinskaya. **Henry Winograd:** in memory of Pinchas Winograd. **Kathleen Walsh Husman Foundation:** in memory of Alex Fozailoff. In honor of the Corson's grandson's bar mitzvah: **Rose Dessau, Naomi and Jay Stonehill. Marla and Robert Ferencz:** in honor of those leading Shabbat services. **Gail and Robert Stagman:** in appreciation of the *shul*.

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### MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

Lake Shore Drive Synagogue is pleased to announce the continuation of a series of Zoom classes led by Rabbi Bauman on topics of interest. The sessions will begin at 7:30 PM on Wednesday evenings. The link is given in the weekly Constant Contact message that our administrator, Tory May, sends out every Tuesday.

We now have Zoom morning minyanim every morning, from Sunday through Friday, at 8:30 AM. And stick around for the post-minyan *divrei torah* delivered by our congregants. The meeting ID is 832 7810 7218 and the password is 810153.

The next meeting of the Book Group will be on Tuesday, March 9, 2021 at 10:00 AM, where Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz's book, [A Guide to Jewish Prayer](#), will be discussed. The meetings will be held via Zoom. Because of Pesach we will not meet in April. If you are not already on the mailing list and wish to be included, please contact Albert Madansky at [albert@chicagobooth.edu](mailto:albert@chicagobooth.edu)