

Sandy Schinfeld's Two Questions: The Twenty-Eighth Annual Passover Gathering Thursday Morning, April 9



It is hard to believe that it is almost a year since Sandy Schinfeld was killed in a tragic accident on the eighth day of Passover. We laughed at *Shabbat* dinner at the Synagogue on Friday night, and sat next to each other on the *bima* on Saturday morning. And then, in an instant, the world turned, and she was gone.

Sandy was a vice president of the congregation, but that hardly describes what she meant to us all. She was a vivacious, ebullient, irrepressible, optimistic presence who

brought energy, talent and hard work to bear in so many synagogue and community activities. She was unique. Our hearts were broken, and our spirits diminished by her untimely passing. We join with her beloved husband Jay and their children, her parents and loved ones, in missing her deeply as this first anniversary approaches.

Not long after Sandy died, I received a letter from one of her cousins with a challenging idea. Sandy was known for her large family *seders*, and last year's was no exception. Twenty-four members of her family and friends joined together to observe the traditional ritual. Sandy always had a way of making the *seder* her own. She put her stamp of individuality on it.

Last year, Sandy challenged the guests at her *seder* by asking them two questions. "What have you done in the past year to make the world a better place? And what will you do this year?"

Her cousin noted that it is traditional for the youngest to ask the four questions about the *seder* ritual, which are usually answered by the eldest present, the leader of the *seder*.

Now, he suggested, why not have the eldest ask Sandy's two questions, and give each person present a chance to offer an answer?

I thought it was a splendid idea. And with this first year of missing Sandy approaching, I urge you to incorporate these questions into your *seder*. Ask Sandy's questions, and listen to each other's answers. In these difficult times, they are more relevant and poignant than ever, and our responsibilities to our fellow human beings are greater than ever. In our generation, the need to improve the world has never been greater. Each one of us must do our part.

The cornerstone of our synagogue building is inscribed with a verse from the prayer *Alaynu*, "To help perfect the world under the Kingdom of the Almighty." That is, indeed, what AJ is all about, and what the message of Freedom contained in *Pesach* is all about.

I will speak more about this at our Twenty-Eighth Annual Passover Gathering, on Thursday morning, April 9, with services beginning at 9:30 a.m. In ancient times, it was Passover and not *Rosh HaShanah* that was the beginning of the new year. In fact, the Biblical references to the beginning of the year always see *Nisan* as the first month.

When I began the Passover Gathering, I was discouraged that while the fall holidays brought us to the synagogue in throngs, Passover services were almost orphaned. Why not, I thought, challenge the congregation to fill the Sanctuary on the first day of Passover? And once I set out the challenge, you responded. Some years have been better attended than others, but I have been proud of our First Day of Passover Annual Gathering.

So this year, take a few hours from your otherwise busy schedule. Take the morning off from work. Join your neighbors and fellow congregants at AJ. Participate in an uplifting *Yom Tov* service.

Let's remember Sandy Schinfeld, and think together about the legacy of her two *seder* questions, "What have you done in the past year to make the world a better place. And what will you do this year?"

Cindy and I, our children, and all the members of the synagogue professional staff join in extending to you our heartfelt best wishes that this festival season will be filled with joy and peace. May it be a time for expressing love to those who are dearest, and achieving reconciliation among those who have been estranged. During this season, when we remember our exodus from Egypt, the most formative event in the history of our people, may we rededicate ourselves to living full, intense, and productive lives as Jews and as human beings.

May God bring peace to our hearts and homes, to our nation, our homeland of Israel, and the whole world.

Thursday, April 9. Put it on your calendar. The Twenty-Eighth Annual Passover Gathering.

Hag Kasher V'Sameach! A kosher and happy *Pesach* to one and all.

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