

## *A Message from the Rabbi, April 2017*

Children, bless their little hearts, loom large at the Passover Seder, just as they do in our tradition as a whole.

Traditionally at the Seder, the youngest child musters the courage and strength to sing the Four Questions, Mah Nishtanah. The kids in attendance contemplate the plight of the four children. Last but not least, they use their instinctive sleuthing skills to search for the afikoman towards the end of the celebration.

Given the Seder's lengthy text, we have always as a people made accommodations to suit even the tiniest of our participants. According to the Talmud, Rabbi Akiba was known for giving parched wheat and nuts to children on the first night of Pesach so that they would not fall asleep and would enjoy [what was going on]." (Pesachim 99a). Recognizing their particular needs, we always are resourceful and plan fun and educational Passover related activities just for our children, to delight and comfort them.

We do not silence the children at the Community Passover Seder but look to empower and embrace them. Nonetheless we do address this theme of imperilment and hardship. We can't pretend it doesn't exist. The woes that the Israelites faced in bondage are with us in some shape or form today. Compassionate souls the world over share this common bond and concern: the safety and wellbeing of children.

You may have noticed in previous years around this time here in our very own city pinwheels accompanied by kids' silhouettes in gardens throughout Newport News. They are powerful reminders that April is child abuse prevention month. The pinwheels "serve as a national symbol to represent hope, health, and safety for children."

This year, the Newport News Healthy Families & Parents as Teachers Community Advisory Board is hosting another Silent Children's Garden, with an opening ceremony on Wednesday, April 13th, at 6 PM, at Boulevard Park, where Warwick and J. Clyde Morris Boulevard intersect, right around the corner from our synagogue.

"Activities will include vocals by Hampton Roads Academy's Tradewinds Chorus, a beautiful pinwheel art display and contest by Parks & Recreation's After-School program. Newport News Mayor McKinley Price, elected officials, and community members will participate."

Last year, I attended the event and I was deeply moved and inspired to get involved. As a devoted steward of our tradition, as a mother, and as a humble servant of the people here in Hampton Roads my heart aches for those youngsters and the adversity they face.

We here at Temple Sinai value, care for and protect our children. We nurture them by

instilling in them our religion's values and by teaching them life skills that have been handed down from generation to generation. Our synagogue has always been open to families in need. Children are always made welcome and to feel at home. We strive to bring healing when hurt resides.

I hope you can attend the opening ceremony so that together we can declare in unison that no child should suffer and that every child has a right to be happy and enjoy a peaceful life.

Wishing you all a meaningful Passover,  
Rabbi Séverine Sokol