

# Ha Shavuah B' Sha'arey Israel

March 26 – April 2, 2009

1 - 8 Nisan, 5769



Candle lighting time 7:33 p.m.  
Friday March 27

Friday Evening Kabbalat Shabbat Services begin at 6:15 p.m.  
Saturday morning Shabbat Services begin at 9:30 a.m.

**Parashat Vayikra** (Torah commentary on pg. 3)  
Annual: Leviticus 1:1 - 5:26 (Etz Hayim, p. 585)  
Triennial: Leviticus 3:1 - 4:26 (Etz Hayim, p. 592)  
Haftarah: Isaiah 43:21 – 44:23 (Etz Hayim, p. 607)



**We wish a Happy Birthday this week to:**

Ellen Cohen, Debbie Oliner, Nicole Hill, Chana Lipson, Sarah Koplin, and Amanda Perofsky

**And Happy Anniversary to:**

Art & Carol Besser and Jenna & Drew Denisar

**This week we remember the Yahrzeit of:**

Samuel Gordon, Maurice Hutten, Harry Frolich, Lucille Cotton, Simon Harry Stern, Joseph Mayer Hirsh, Betty Kruger, and Nathan Segal,

**There is no Sunday School this week**



What a wonderful Scholar-in-Residence weekend! If you weren't there, what a shame; you really missed a terrific weekend. Thank you Billy Singer, Ellen Cohen, Terri Frolich, Francie Marshall, Bess Cotton, Chrissy Crabtree, Jami Gaudet and Shelley Davidson for all you did to make this weekend such a success.

*"All who are hungry – come and eat. All who are needy – come and join the Passover celebration"*



Do you have room at your Seder table? Do you need a place to go for Seder? Please call the office and we will match those who have room with those who need a place to go.

**Lunch & Learn** meets at Barnes & Noble on  
Wednesdays at noon





**Faculty Art Show March 17 - 27**  
 Featuring the work of **Laurel Robinson**  
 In the James Earl Carter Library Gallery the campus of  
 Georgia Southwestern State University  
 For more information call the Fine Arts Department (229) 931-2204



Thursday, April 2  
 Faculty Artist Piano Recital  
 Featuring **Ian Altman**  
 7:30 p.m. Fickling Hall, McCorkle Music Building, at  
 Mercer University

# CAMERA ALERT

COMMITTEE FOR ACCURACY IN MIDDLE EAST REPORTING IN AMERICA **CAMERA** **SNAPSHOTS**

College students can earn a free 10-day visit to Israel on the CAMERA Fellows student leadership trip from **June 14-24**. A few spots are available for knowledgeable student activists to join the CAMERA Fellows Representatives. Students are required to write at least two informational pro-Israel Op-Eds in order to participate on the trip. (For details about requirements, contact [Aviva@camera.org](mailto:Aviva@camera.org))

## Interested in participating more in Shabbat service?

**Lead a portion of services**

**Read Torah**

**Chant the Haftarah**

**Call Rabbi Bat-Or and she will help you make it happen.**



If you have some free time during the week of April 14 - 21 the Bibb County schools need volunteers to serve as proctors for the CRCT tests. To volunteer at Springdale call Rhonda Koplin. Proctors are assigned to each classroom to assist in administering this test. Proctors should plan to arrive at Springdale at 8:30 a.m. and will be asked to stay until approximately 12:00 noon. If you would rather volunteer at another school just give that school a call.



**Seven symbols are the seder plate.... What is the reason for them?**  
[Click here to find out](#)

Don't forget the CSI Gift Shop for all your gift needs. Seder plates \* Matzah Covers\* Affikomen bags\* toys to keep the *kindelah* entertained \* everything you need to make your Seder table even more special!



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## Parashat Vayikra

*This week's commentary was written by Rabbi David Hoffman, scholar-in-residence, Development Department, JTS.*

Sin, Ritual Pollution, and Divine Alienation

Said Rabbi Yosa: Why do we begin children in their studies with the Book of Leviticus? We should start them with the Book of Genesis!

Rather, the Holy One said, "Just like the *korbanot* [sacrifices] are pure, so too are children pure—let's have the 'pure' engaged with the 'pure.'" (Midrash Pesikta de Rav Kahana 6:3)

In many ways, this tradition is hard to understand. Why begin a young child's Torah education with something as remote from his or her own life experience as sacrifices and Temple pageantry? Leviticus is difficult for adults to find relevant, let alone children. Give young students the drama of the Exodus and the moment of the Covenant at Sinai. Take children through the family narratives of Genesis that might captivate their imagination as they navigate their own familial dynamics as sons and daughters and brothers and sisters. Teach them the Book of Deuteronomy, which amounts to a review of the entire Torah. But to what ends might we throw them into a world of entrails and gore, the burning of frankincense, the sprinkling of blood, and the choreographies involved with the various sacrificial offerings?

This fifth-century midrash from the Land of Israel gives voice to an essential truth about both Israelite religion and Rabbinic Judaism. Even in a post-Temple world—a world in which we do not offer animal sacrifices (nor do we wish for their return)—*korbanot* and the service in the Temple still hold a creative role in the religious life of the Jew. I submit that the theology that helps animate the sacrificial system is potentially as meaningful for us as moderns as it may have been for *B'nai Yisrael* (the Children of Israel) in the desert.

Consider the *korban hattat*, commonly translated as a "sin offering," which we are introduced to in Leviticus, chapter 4. Jacob Milgrom, one of the more important modern biblical scholars on the Book of Leviticus, has argued based on contextual observations and grammatical considerations that the word *hattat* does not mean "sin" in this instance. Rather, this construction means "to cleanse, purge, or decontaminate." Consequently, he translates *korban hattat* as a "purification offering" (see Ezekiel 43:22, 26 and Rashi on Numbers 19:19; see also Milgrom's masterful commentary on Leviticus in the *Anchor Bible* series). But this rendering is curious: whom or what does this offering purge?

At first glance, one might think that this sacrifice seeks to purify the person offering the sacrifice. Having unintentionally committed an infraction against one of the laws of the Torah, the individual—once realizing his guilt—must bring a male goat without blemish as an offering (Lev. 4:28). In this way the inadvertent sinner removes the spiritual impurity caused by his behavior. Yet, unlike other "purification offerings" in the Torah that are intended to remove impurity from the individual, a person who brings a *korban hattat* for the inadvertent violation of a prohibitive commandment does not require immersion in water (contrast this with Leviticus 15). Seemingly, because the sin was unintentional and because he now feels remorse, this means that he has undergone inner purification and no immersion in water is required (Lev. 4:27).

Milgrom also draws attention to the use of the blood in the *korban hattat* as further proof that it is *not the one offering* the sacrifice who is undergoing purification. Once the goat is

slaughtered, the priest takes some of the animal's blood and puts it on the horns of the altar (Lev. 4:30). In this way, through the use of the animal's blood, the priest decontaminates (*va-ye-hatte*, 8:15) the altar and the sanctuary. The blood is never applied to a human being in the Torah. The altar is daubed with blood and the blood of the *hattat* is sometimes brought inside the sanctuary and sprinkled on the curtain (Lev. 16:15). By sprinkling the blood of this sacrifice in these various locations, the priest purifies the most sacred objects and areas of the sanctuary on behalf of the person who caused their contamination by his inadvertent offense.

So to be clear: the consequence of the individual's inadvertent sin is the contamination of the sanctuary. Human behavior affects the sanctuary in a direct way. The Israelite has to bring a *korban hattat* to purge the impurity residing in the sanctuary that his behavior has created. And there is urgency for the individual to redress the impurity he or she has caused. In the priestly theology, the sanctuary is God's dwelling place on earth and God will not abide in a polluted sanctum. God will tolerate a measure of impurity in God's house, but it must be managed. If it is left unattended, God will be forced from the sanctuary heavenward (see Ezekiel 11). Impurity and the holy are antagonistic qualities in the Torah.

Yehzkiel Kaufmann, one of the greatest of modern biblical scholars, has observed that in the Ancient world impurity was understood as a demonic force and the pagan temple priests helped purify the temples of the resident gods who battled cosmic evil in the form of impurities. Impurity was an independent force in creation. In ancient Israel, there is no concept of demonic impurity as a force in the world. Kaufmann stressed that in biblical Israel, unlike Near Eastern religions, impurity was a creation of human beings. Human beings, not the demonic, cause problems in the world.

Human beings have the power, through their action and inaction, to contaminate the sanctuary and force God out. This is the theological message of the *korban hattat*. Understood in this conceptual framework, sin is any behavior that forces God from this world. Through the *korban hattat*, the Torah teaches us that human beings must assume responsibility for the world. The ills of society are not the creation of demonic or random forces. Our behavior has ramifications. We have control over whether our communities are worthy of God's Holy Presence or not.

Is there a more appropriate message than this with which to begin a young student's Torah education?

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**For other commentaries on this week's Torah portion check out these sites:**

[Aish.com](http://Aish.com)

[AJU](http://AJU)

[ISJL](http://ISJL)

[MyJewishLearning.com](http://MyJewishLearning.com)

[USCJ Torah Sparks](http://USCJ Torah Sparks)

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**There are still two easy ways for you to help  
Congregation Sha'arey Israel make a little extra money**

**1. visit [www.goodsearch.com](http://www.goodsearch.com) for your online searches. This won't cost you anything but CSI makes a penny each time to search**

**2. for all your online shopping needs go to [csimacon.org](http://csimacon.org) and click on our Amazon.com link.**

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**Quick links:**

**[CSI Macon Online](#)**

[United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism \(USCJ\)](#)

[JTS Podcast - this week's Parsha](#)

[Audio Siddur](#)

[Global Jewish News Service](#)

[Israeli News Broadcast – in English](#)

[Crash Course in Jewish History](#)

[The Jewish Ethicist](#)

[The Jewish Women's Archive](#)

[Hadassah](#)

[Synagogue 3000](#)

[Learn through USCJ online](#)

[AJU - Walking with God series](#)

[The William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum](#)

**For the children (or the young at heart):**

[Torah Portion Coloring Pages](#)

[Babaganews Torah Parasha of the week movie](#)

[Winter 2009 Edition of UCSJ's magazine \*Your Child\*](#)