

Ha Shavuah B' Sha'arey Israel

September 3 – September 10, 2009

14 Elul - 21 Elul 5769



Candle lighting time 7:38 pm
Friday September 4

Friday Evening Kabbalat Shabbat Services begin at 6:15 pm
Saturday morning Shabbat Services begin at 9:30 am

PARASHAT KI TAVO

Annual: Deuteronomy 26:1 – 29:8 (Etz Hayim, p. 1140)

Triennial: Deuteronomy 26:12 – 28:6 (Etz Hayim, p. 1142)

Haftarah: Isaiah 60:1 – 22 (Etz Hayim, p. 1161)



We would like to extend our condolences ~

To Ian Altman and his family on the passing of his mother, Shirley Kahn Altman. The funeral will be graveside at the Jewish Cemetery in Thomasville. There will be a Shiva Minyan at the synagogue on Tuesday, September 8, Wednesday, September 9, Thursday, September 10 at 7:00 pm, and Sunday morning, September 13 at 9:00 am.

We wish a Happy Birthday this week to:

Rabbi Rachel Bat-Or, Rebecca Purcel, Chip Koplin, Benjamin Toland and Sorin Ardet

And Happy Anniversary to:

Marty & Evan Koplin, Irit & Bill Ullman, Renee & Robert Schwartz and Beth & David Cohen

This week we remember the Yahrzeit of:

Juliet Dayan, Eugene L. Mendel, Reuben Weiss, Emil Hirsh, Fannie Korros, Leon Nirenstein, Sam Chanin, Dora Tinsky, Hannah Scharfman, Elizabeth Annie Van Ollefen

Marc & Meredith Lipson invite you to join them for the simcha of their daughter Anna's Bat Mitzvah this weekend.

Friday – September 4 – 6:15 pm
Saturday – September 5 – 9:30 am

No Religious School this Sunday in observance of the Labor Day holiday. The CSI Office will be closed on Monday.

Junior Congregation is Saturday, September 12

Selichot Program
Saturday, September, 12, 2009
9:00 pm at the Synagogue
God on Trial

This movie depicts concentration camp prisoners, believers and non-believers, putting God on trial for allowing the Holocaust to happen. Screenwriter Frank Cottrell Boyce's script is based on the unconfirmed story that a group of prisoners at Auschwitz convened a rabbinical court to ask who is to blame for this devastation to the Jewish people.

CSI 5770 Campaign

There are still some members who have not made a commitment to the CSI Campaign. This synagogue belongs to all of us and we encourage everyone to be a part of this campaign in whatever way you are able.

Important Note ~

You may now pay your Synagogue bill with a credit card and there will be a section on your statement for you to submit your credit card information or you may call it in to the CSI office.

If you need Guest High Holiday Tickets
Please contact Deborah Adler

LUNCH AND LEARN IS RETURNING!!!

The Rabbi has been working hard on many ideas to make this an interesting and informative curriculum. We are planning to meet at Harpin's on Tuesday mornings at 10:00am beginning Oct. 20th.

We would love to know what you think!

If you are interested in participating, please let us know.
Send an email to Stephanie Kross at skross@cox.net

Don't forget the CSI Gift Shop for all your gift needs.

Weddings - Housewarming Gifts
Birthdays - Anniversaries - B'nai Mitzvahs

**20% Off on all
Rosh Hashanah Gift Items
& Rosh Hashanah Toys
thru the Holidays**



Free gift wrapping and local delivery.

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Parashat Ki Tavo

The Order of Disorder - A word and its opposite may be one and the same.
This week's commentary is by Rabbi Ismar Schorsch

The Bible's most famous riddle was the brainchild of Samson. "Out of the eater came something to eat; out of the strong came something sweet" (Judges 14:14). Samson posed it on the occasion of his seven-day wedding feast to 30 young Philistine men who came to celebrate his marriage to one of their own. On the last day, the young men responded gleefully: "What is sweeter than honey, and what is stronger than a lion?" Dismayed, Samson accused them of coercing his bride: "Had you not plowed with my heifer, you would not have guessed my riddle." And indeed, threatened by them with savage revenge, she had wheedled the answer out of Samson, only to betray him, exactly as Delilah would do later in his life.

Behind the riddle lay a real life experience. On his first trip to the land of the Philistines to arrange the marriage, Samson had killed bare-handed, a full grown lion on the attack. Upon his return for the wedding feast, he turned aside to inspect the carcass. A swarm of bees had taken up residence in its skeleton. Samson scooped up a handful of honey which he savored and shared with his parents without revealing its source. The riddle conveys the impact of the experience: Samson was intrigued by the phenomenon of an object becoming its opposite. Reality seemed more fluid than fixed.

That sense of impermanence is imbedded in the very language of the Bible. Biblical Hebrew contains a small number of words that bear antithetical meanings. These words are more than homonyms with dissimilar meanings like bear (to carry) and bear (the animal.) Their meanings are diametrically opposed to each other. Moreover, in English, homonyms usually derive fortuitously

from different origins, whereas in biblical Hebrew the polarity of meanings seems to inhere by design in one and the same word. Like Samson's lion, the word morphs into its opposite.

It is the appearance of such a Hebrew homonym in our parashah that prompts me to take you down an arcane philological path. But I do so because in this instance a deep worldview is built into the structure of the language.

This week we read of the tithe that every Israelite was obliged to give every third year of the sabbatical cycle. In contrast to the tithes of other years, this tithe was not to be brought to the central sanctuary for its priestly officials, but distributed at home to those at risk-- orphans, widows, strangers and Levites. When the duty had been fulfilled, the Israelite was to attest in a public declaration that, "I have not eaten of it [the tithe] while in mourning [*ve-oni*], I have not cleared out any of it while I was unclean, and I have not deposited any of it with the dead" (Deuteronomy 26:14). That is; as Jeffrey Tigay explains in his sterling commentary on Deuteronomy, the poor-tithe was no less sacred than that which was to be brought to the sanctuary. Both belonged to God and hence had to be kept ritually pure.

What interests me, however, is the Hebrew word for mourning, *oni*. The exact same word in other contexts means strength as in Jacob's reference to Reuben, his first-born, "the first fruit of my vigor [*reshit oni*]" (Genesis 49:3). On occasion, these two meanings of *oni* may even converge in a double entendre. Rachel expires tragically as she gives birth to Benjamin: "But as she breathed her last-- for she was dying --she named him *Ben-oni*" (Genesis 35:18), which could be translated with equal validity as "son of my suffering" or "son of my strength!" The polarity of meanings gives rise to a dialectic that mirrors the complexity of life itself.

Another homonym comes from last week's parashah. The well-known Hebrew word for holy (*kadosh*) can also at times mean unholy. Thus the Torah prohibits the mixing of different crops in the same field (*kil'ayim*): "You shall not sow your vineyard with a second kind of seed, else the crop-- from the seed you have sown-- and the yield of the vineyard may not be used" (Deuteronomy 22:9). In Hebrew the verb for "may not be used" is a form of *kadosh*--*pen tikdash*, meaning literally, unholy. To intermingle crops defiles the produce making it unusable and therefore to be destroyed.

Similarly, later in the parashah, the Torah cryptically forbids the institution of cultic prostitutes, whether male *kadesh* or female *kedeshah*. The connection of both terms to the word *kadosh* is self-evident. Clearly, implicit in the word and concept of the "holy" is its polar opposite, ever-ready to break forth in an act of sacrilege. In fact, the relationship between the words "sacred" and "sacrilege," which share a common Latin root--meaning holy is as close a parallel as I can find in English to the organic homonyms of biblical Hebrew.

The prohibition against mixed cropping appears as part of a cluster of laws forbidding other combinations such as yoking an ox and an ass for plowing or making garments of wool and linen (*sha'atnez*). All of these proscriptions are informed by the Torah's pervasive thrust to establish order out of chaos. The ideal is to respect and perpetuate that order, the individuality of its constituent parts and the integrity of the boundaries on which it rests.

And, yet, reality daily threatens to erode and eradicate that order. Things are hopelessly intermingled and jumbled. It is to that underlying dynamic of disarray that the homonyms of biblical Hebrew allude. An excess of holiness can easily turn religion into fanaticism. A difficult delivery denied Rachel the joy of nursing and nurturing her baby. Our lives are jolted by a never-ending cascade of conflicting emotions and conditions. Hebrew philology points to a philosophic truth: the normal state of humanity is impermanence and disorder.

The texts for this Shabbat refract our common destiny in the fluid fate of ancient Israel. The parashah opens with a scene of peace and prosperity. Once settled in the land of promise, Israelite farmers are to journey to the country's central sanctuary with the first fruits of their annual harvest to offer a prayer of thanksgiving. It is the bounty of the soil that enables them also to share of their produce with their vulnerable fellow-citizens in a poor-tithe.

But that idyll of pastoral tranquility quickly gives way to a horrific litany of national calamities. The covenant with God is not an unmixed blessing. Israel's infidelity will lead to defeat, deportation and exile. Endless sights of suffering will drive many to distraction. As strangers in foreign lands, Israelites will be smitten with an inescapable sense of precariousness.

And yet the covenant is not abrogated. Contrition and atonement will be followed by restoration. Exile is not to be Israel's irreversible condition. This week's *haftarah* of consolation-- the sixth of seven between Tisha B'Av and Rosh Hashanah-- soars with images of reconciliation and redemption. The exiles will soon come streaming back. Their oppressors will cease to revile them and hasten to rebuild Jerusalem for them. Bathed by God's presence, Jerusalem will emit an effusion of light that will free it of need for the sun by day or by night.

And your people, all of them righteous,
Shall possess the land for all time;
They are the shoot that I [God] planted.
My handiwork in which I glory.
The smallest shall become a clan;
The least, a mighty nation.
I the Lord will speed it in due time. (Isaiah 60:21-22)

Still, till then instability remains the actual order of our daily lives, individually and collectively. Samson's riddle is the key to the riddle of life. As 9/11 reminds us so painfully, chaos lies in wait to shatter our equilibrium beyond endurance and recovery. The recognition of that vulnerability is encoded in the very fabric of the Hebrew language, because the mission of religion is to help us master life

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

Aish.com

ISJL Taste of Torah

JTS

MyJewishLearning.com

USCJ Torah Sparks

There are still two easy ways for you to help

Congregation Sha'arey Israel can make a little extra money...

1. visit www.goodsearch.com for your online searches. This won't cost you anything but CSI makes a penny each time you search.

every time you



CSI earns



2. for all your online shopping needs go to csimacon.org and click on our Amazon.com link.

Contact information:

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**Quick links:**

- [CSI Macon Online](#)
- [United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism \(USCJ\)](#)
- [JTS Podcast - this week's Parsha](#)
- [Audio Siddur](#)
- [Jewish Telegraphic Agency \(JTA\)](#)
- [Israeli News Broadcast – in English](#)
- [The Jewish Ethicist](#)
- [Synagogue 3000](#)
- [Learn through USCJ online](#)
- [The William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum](#)
- [United Jewish Communities \(UJC\)](#)
- [American Jewish University](#)

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

- [Torah Portion Coloring Pages](#)
- [Babaganews Torah Parasha of the week movie](#)

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