

Ha Shavuah B' Sha'arey Israel

April 1 – April 8, 2010

17 Nisan – 24 Nisan 5770



Candle lighting time 7:37 pm
Friday April 2

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

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## Shabbat Hol HaMoed Pesach

Torah (Exodus 33:12-34:26) Etz Hayim p. 538  
Maftir (Numbers 28:19-25) Etz Hayim p. 932  
Haftarah (Ezekiel 37:1-14): Etz Hayim p. 1307

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Best Wishes for a Speedy Recovery to:

Art Besser, Elaine Dreizin, Ethel Koplin, Paul Kruger, Doris Rabinowitz, Laurel Robinson, Valiant Haller and Paul Adler

We wish a Happy Birthday this week to:

Sarah Koplin, Amanda Perofsky, Jaden Adler, Addie Denisar, Aaron Brown, Greg Ziesenhene, Debbie Ziesenhene and Carole Schustek

We wish a Happy Anniversary this week to:

Jenna & Drew Denisar

This week we remember the Yahrzeit of:

Hyman Adelstone, Sylvia Goodrich Brown, David Michael Montrose, Hyman Goodman Safer, Sol Bernstein, Alec Kell, Abraham Max Cohen, Rebecca Glyck, Lee Abe Harris, Harry Haskins, Rhoda Bergman Goodrich, Rosa Goldman Haskins, David S. Spielberger, Bertha Schwartz, Rooky Gaudet, Dena Lehman, Isadore Robinson, Cecile Ruth Ginsberg Schlesinger

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## No Religious School on Sunday – APRIL 4

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Next Junior Congregation is Saturday – April 10 – 10:00 AM
Adult in Charge: David Ilan
Davening Leaders: Teva Ilan & Anna Lipson

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## Passover Service Schedule

### **Passover Day 7**

(Candle Lighting on Sunday, April 4: 7:38 pm)

### **Monday, April 5 - 9:00 am service**

Candle Lighting time 8:34 pm

### **Passover Day 8 - Yizkor**

### **Tuesday, April 6 - 9:00 am service**

Please consider attending so we will have a minyan.

## **Adult Education Class**

taught by Rabbi Rachel Bat-Or

### **No Classes on April 6 & April 27**

**Jewish History, Part II: Tuesday Nights, 7:15-8:15pm**

at the Synagogue on **April 13 & 20 and May 4 & 11**

We are using A Short History of the Jewish People by Raymond Scheindlin for the history classes.

### New CSI Office Hours

10:00 AM - 4:30 PM

Monday thru Friday



**Cantorial Intern, Richard Bessman**  
will be joining us

**April 9-11 & April 30-May 2**



## Yom Hashoah Community Service

Sunday - April 11 - 7:00 PM  
at  
Congregation Sha'arey Israel

The guest speaker will be Fred Gross, the author of  
"One Step Ahead of Hitler: A Jewish Child's Journey through France"

## Family Shabbat Dinner Friday - April 16

*Service begins at 6:15 pm  
with dinner to follow*

Adults - \$10                      Children under 13 - \$7

Kids under 3 - free

All Religious School Students are free!

Please call 745-4571 or email: [secretary@csimacon.org](mailto:secretary@csimacon.org)  
to make reservations

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*Tefilat Lev Shaleyem Whole Heart one hour service
will be Saturday, April 24 beginning at 10:30am*
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## Passover 5770

*This week's commentary was written by Rabbi Marc Wolf, vice chancellor and chief development officer, JTS.*

Darkness is pervasive in the story of the Exodus from Egypt. In her commentary on the plagues, Aviva Zornberg notes that the last set of three plagues form an increasing darkness. Locusts prevent us from seeing the ground, darkness eclipses all light, and the death of the firstborn happens as midnight approaches.

We can understand the spiritual implications of not being able to see the ground, and the death of the firstborn, but what is the force of a plague that itself is darkness? Is this the darkness that approaches as night falls—or when one can simply not see something? Bracketed by locusts and the death that comes as midnight approaches, we can be led to assume that there is something distinctive about this darkness.

The text itself can give us some clues.

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Hold out your arm toward the sky that there may be darkness upon the land of Egypt, a darkness that can be touched." Moses held out his arm toward the sky and a thick darkness descended upon all the land of Egypt for three days. People could not see one another, and for three days no one could get up from where he was; but all the Israelites enjoyed light in their dwellings. (Exod. 10:21–23)

I've always wondered what the force of this plague was. Here we are progressing through the plagues—reaching the penultimate—and it really doesn't seem to be that bad. Darkness? A time when people couldn't see each other? It's like God's brainstorming group came up a bit short—or when David Letterman goes through the "Top Ten" and it doesn't get funnier. We expect the ninth plague to be truly the "wrath of God." But here we are faced with simply turning off the lights. My son does this to his brother as more of an annoyance than anything else.

The verses above give us some hint that there was something more to this darkness. Midrash Rabbah picks up on the repetition of the word darkness in God's instruction to Moses and suggests that the repetition teaches us that the darkness extended beyond the three days to a total of seven days. The thinking then was that a plague of darkness for three days was not too bad—but seven days, now that's a plague.

Rashi also picks up on the repetition and suggests an increasing oppressiveness to the darkness. He describes the darkness—or possibly the impact that the darkness had on people. In his reading, the plague also lasts seven days, and you can imagine the mental impact that this would have—for the first days in darkness you will still be looking for the light, fumbling around seeking some human contact. But after that, it begins to affect you even more—you give up looking for light—you give up looking for the contact.

However, it is Nahmanides who takes it a step further and suggests that there was a physical quality to the darkness. In his understanding, darkness descended from the Heavens and actually extinguished light. It was not only the absence of light—but it had a power to it.

Considering the emotional and spiritual impact, then, the darkness had the power to affect things—it was not merely the absence of light.

This talk about the power of the darkness to physically or mentally change the people it is afflicting brings me back to my first question—Is darkness what we understand it to be—a dense, oppressive, overwhelming loneliness? Or is there something else we should learn from this plague?

Rabbeinu Bahya in his commentary makes a very interesting observation on the plague of darkness.

There are three occurrences of darkness in this parashah. "That there may be darkness"; "darkness that can be touched"; and "thick darkness". This corresponds to three types of darkness [found in the Torah]: deep darkness, tangible darkness, and cloudy darkness. Deep darkness: this is the darkness that Avram encountered during his covenant with God—"And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning torch that passed between those pieces"; tangible darkness: this is the darkness of Egypt—"a darkness that can be touched"; and cloudy darkness: this is the darkness when receiving the Torah—"And the people stood far away, and Moses drew near to the cloudy darkness where God was."

For Rabbeinu Bahya, darkness is the catalyst for an intensely divine moment. He links the darkness of the plagues with that of Avram at his covenantal moment with God and with Moses at his revelatory moment. So what if we are supposed to read this darkness in that same light (pardon the pun)? Perhaps what we read as a plague is a divine spiritual opportunity.

Throughout the plagues, we read that their purpose was so that the Egyptians would know God. Here is one example, but the phrase surfaces over and over again: "And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch forth My hand upon Egypt, and bring out the people of Israel from among them" (Exod. 7:5).

With this understanding, the plagues are not an all-out war on Egypt, but a moment when God was waiting—quietly in the darkness—waiting for the Egyptians to have that divine experience. Remarkably, the continuation of Rashi's commentary mentions that there were Israelites who died during this plague—those who did not want to participate in the Exodus—those who did not want to engage the divine. They were overcome by the darkness and perished before the Exodus.

Darkness, then, is not the penultimate blow in this war on Egypt, but the chance for all of the people—Egyptian and Hebrew—to engage the divine. Those first three days they are stumbling, reaching out for something, but still unwilling to engage the divine.

It is our choice, in our times of darkness, whether we choose to engage the divine.

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

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

[ISJL Taste of Torah](http://ISJL Taste of Torah)

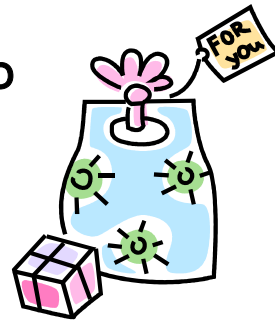
[JTS](http://JTS)

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

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

## The CSI Gift Shop

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Call Terri 477-8597 or Deborah 474-0505 for an Appointment  
Open Sundays during Sunday School

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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](#)

