

Ha Shavuah B' Sha'arey Israel

May 27 – June 2, 2010

14 Sivan – 20 Sivan 5770



Candle lighting time 8:17 pm
Friday May 28

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

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**PARASHAT BEHA'LOTEKHA** (Commentary on Page 3)

Annual (Num. 8:1-12:16): Etz Hayim p. 816

Triennial (Num. 10:35-12:16): Etz Hayim p. 826

Haftarah (Zechariah 2:14-4:7): Etz Hayim p. 837



**Best Wishes for a Speedy Recovery to:**

Elaine Dreizin, Ethel Koplin, Paul Kruger, Doris Rabinowitz, Valiant Haller and Paul Adler

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

Scott Brody, Nancy Chanin, Scott Bayme, Robert Donner and Gail Krapf

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

Anslie & Joshua Perkel and Stephanie & Paul Kross

**Mazel Tov!!**

To our security guard, Officer Ulric Bellaire, who was recently promoted to Sergeant.

And to Johanna Chanin, daughter of member Leah Chanin and the late Louis Chanin, for being elected President of Adas Israel Congregation in Washington, D.C. Adas Israel Congregation is the largest conservative synagogue in the Washington area and has 1500 family units as members. Johanna will assume the office of president in July, 2011. Johanna became a Bat Mitzvah and was married at Sha'arey Israel and her father, Louis, was a past president of CSI.

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

Beatrice Holtz, Israel Meyer Roobin, Ruth Brahn Karson, Linda Lamb, Annie Becker Marshall, Max Nathan, Hermina Stern Spielberger, Hyman David Kaplan, Mark Zarks

**Please note the CSI Office will be closed on Monday,  
May 31<sup>st</sup> in observance of Memorial Day.**

**Congregation Sha'arey Israel  
ANNUAL CONGREGATION MEETING  
SUNDAY – JUNE 13 – 4:00 PM**

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The New High Holiday Mahzor Lev Shalem  
Prayer Books Have Arrived at CSI

If you would like to plate a prayer book  
for a life cycle event, the cost is \$30.00

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***Please Help ~ ~ ~***

There is a plastic storage receptacle next to the Plum Street entrance for non-perishable food donations that will go to Macon Outreach. They are always in need so please help when you can.

We have added a couple of baskets for your empty medicine (pill) bottles. You can take off the label or black out the information on them. They will be given to countries that are in need of them.

Thank you!

The CSI Social Action Committee

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**The CSI Gift Shop**

Birthdays - Anniversaries  
Bar/Bat Mitzvahs - Graduations  
House Warming Gifts



Call Terri 477-8597 or Deborah 474-0505 for an Appointment

# PARASHAT BEHA'LOTEKHA

Numbers 8:1-12:16

*This week's torah commentary is by Rabbi Patricia Karlin-Neumann, the Senior Associate Dean for Religious Life at Stanford University.*

## **A Caretaker's Prayer**

**El na r'fa na lah.**

B'haalot'cha is overflowing with complex ritual and detail: the lighting of the lamps; the purification and consecration of the Levites; the elaboration of the pesach sacrifice; the carefully choreographed journey through the wilderness; the mutiny of meat, manna, and quail precipitating a plague for those who were led by their appetites; the challenge of Moses' siblings to his leadership; and finally, the sudden onset of his sister Miriam's disease. Yet amidst these richly detailed stories, we find one contrasting, stark, parsimonious prayer: "El na r'fa na lah" ("O God, pray heal her!").

Five words--eleven Hebrew letters--are all that Moses speaks (12:13). Except for God's name, each word ends in a vowel, as if each word were an unending cry. It is as if each word is punctuated with an exclamation point, the brevity of the syllables giving voice to the tortured helplessness of the supplicant: "God! Please! Heal! Please! Her!"

In the midst of catastrophe, the verb of consequence--the bull's-eye of the prayer--is the central plea: heal! Indeed, the prayer is nearly a palindrome--reading the same forwards as it does backwards--homing in with laser precision on that most urgent desire: heal!

## **A Plea from Someone Trying to Help**

This prayer has few words but much resonance. It is a primal cry, capturing fear, powerlessness, and incomprehensibility in the face of sudden illness, accident, or injury. It is not the entreaty of the one beset by the catastrophe, but rather that of the witness, the powerless onlooker, the potential caregiver absorbing the shock, the one who is overwhelmed and stymied about how to help.

When illness, accident, or injury comes to those we love, it is up to us--those who are comparatively healthy and able--not only to beseech but also to provide hope and healing. For the caregiver, there is time only for truncated and hurried prayer, time only for stolen moments of naked cries and yearnings of hope. For the caregiver shouldering the burdens of action--making the loved one comfortable, researching treatment, running interference with physicians, reporting news, calming fears--prayer is a blessed moment of calm in an otherwise turbulent time.

When one whom we love is in danger, not only our loved one but also we ourselves face darkness. According to Jewish tradition, the first person who prayed in darkness was young Jacob, on the eve of his exile from home. The Midrash describes the confluence of physical and metaphorical darkness this way: "In order to speak to Jacob in private, God caused the sun to go down--like a king who calls for the light to be extinguished, as he wishes to speak to his friend in private" (B'reishit Rabbah 68:10). So, too, the prayer of the caregiver is private, conspiratorial, hidden from the one who is the object of supplication, yet revealed to the One who can respond. We want to protect the one who is suffering from the compounded weight of the caregiver's distress.

But in the darkness, it is safe to give voice to our fear of dreadful scenarios and of the unknown. In the darkness, it is a relief to relinquish the weight of trying to hold up another's spirits, and to acknowledge that someone with far more power than we possess is the ultimate caregiver. In the darkness, it is possible to renew courage, to find new paths, to discover the equanimity essential to living with the terror of catastrophe.

### **Danger and Opportunity**

Medical sociologist Alexandra Dundas Todd begins *Double Vision*, a memoir of her son's treatment and recovery from brain cancer, with this reflection: "The Chinese word for crisis consists of two characters: danger and opportunity. When my son, Drew, a senior in college, was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer bordering his brain, the danger was clear; the opportunity was less apparent. Danger flashed through our lives daily, while opportunities lay waiting in murky waters, to emerge only tentatively.

Family closeness, the ability to savor each moment, to find strength and courage where we didn't know they existed, to discover new methods of treatment that complemented all the surgeries and radiation and eased both body and mind, all contributed to making the unbearable bearable, turning an assault into a challenge" (*Double Vision: An East-west Collaboration for Coping with Cancer*, 1994, p. xiii).

It does, indeed, take "double vision" to see both blessing and curse, to picture opportunity amidst danger. Courage grows through hope, through the willingness to look for unknown possibilities and to grasp them, through refusing to see only danger in darkness when its counterpart, opportunity, may be waiting in the shadows. The prayer of the caregiver, the cry of the distraught parent, the reassuring whisper of the loving spouse, can help to wrest some measure of opportunity out of danger.

El na rfa na la. In its simplicity and raw clarity, this prayer of healing recognizes that more than double vision, the vision of the Divine is immeasurable, and the capacity of the Healer is limitless. In response to Moses' prayer, God reveals the duration of Miriam's exile to the wilderness of disease. Her fortunate loved ones have only to wait out a time of disequilibrium and uncertainty; they have received sacred reassurance that all will be well. Yet in anticipating her return, the Torah conveys a truth well known to the loved ones of someone contending with affliction and crisis--v'haam lo nasa ad heasef miryam ("and the people did not march on until Miriam was readmitted," 12:15).

Life does not go on with any sense of normalcy or progression while one whom we love is endangered; the caregiver's attention and effort revolves around the one who is stricken. Time and space are altered. The yearning for healing expands to fill both.

Our present rituals may not be as formulaic as those described in B'haalot'cha; our contemporary prayers of healing may have become longer and more specific; our modern understanding of treatment may be more nuanced and comprehensive; but Moses' wisdom abides. The essence of what we seek is still found in his direct and eternal prayer. El na rfa na La: God! Please! Heal! Please! Her!

**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](#)

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**Contact information:**

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Terri Frolich - [tovamacon@bellsouth.net](mailto:tovamacon@bellsouth.net)
- Hospitality - Beth Cohen - [badbethie27@aol.com](mailto:badbethie27@aol.com)
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- Social Action - David Ilan - [ilanclan@gmail.com](mailto:ilanclan@gmail.com)
- Synagogue Donations - Beth Cohen - [badbethie27@aol.com](mailto:badbethie27@aol.com)
- Ways & Means - Scott Bayme - [scottbayme@kaybeeofmacon.com](mailto:scottbayme@kaybeeofmacon.com)

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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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