

Ha Shavuah B' Sha'arey Israel

July 8 – July 14, 2010

26 Tammuz – 3 Av 5770



Candle lighting time 8:27 pm
Friday July 9

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

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**PARASHAT MATTOT-MASEI** (Commentary on Page 3)

**BIRKAT HAHODESH**

Annual (Num. 30:2-36:13): Etz Hayim p. 941

Triennial (Num. 33:50-36:13): Etz Hayim p. 957

Haftarah (Jeremiah 2:4-28 and 3:4 [A]; 4:1-2 [S]): Etz Hayim p. 973



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

Elaine Dreizin, Carol Besser, Paul Kruger, Doris Rabinowitz, Paul Adler and Jenna Denisar

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

Fabianne Perofsky, Stuart Kent, Sivia Lipson, David Cohen and Shelley Kruger

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

Lynn & Jay Freedman

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

Rabbi Charles Glyck, Isaac Kessler, Arthur Schwartz, Katherine S. Eidex, Morris Backer, Isaac Samuel Rubin, Solomon Tinsky, Sarah D. Avrunin, Abraham A. Winer, Robert Gerson, Scheiwa Granek

**Please Note** ~

**Rabbi Bat-Or will be on vacation  
Monday, July 12 thru Sunday, July 18**

**The CSI Office will be closed on  
Tuesday & Wednesday, July 13 & 14**

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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 \$35.00**

Tisha B'Av Commemoration Monday - July 19 - 7:00 pm

On Monday, July 19, we will commemorate Tisha B'Av (the 9th day of the Hebrew month of Av), when the First and Second Temples were destroyed in Jerusalem. Before 70 CE, the Temple was the centerpiece of our religious practice. There were other tragedies that took place on the 9th of Av. On that date in 1492 Jews were expelled from Spain; in 1942, Jews were deported from Warsaw Ghetto to the Treblinka concentration camp.

Please join us for a reading of the Book of Lamentations (Eicha), an account of the destruction of the city of Jerusalem in 586 BCE and various readings about these historical events.

Observing Tisha B'Av in this way helps us reaffirm our intention to continue practicing our religion, to educate our children Jewishly and to come together as a community, three essential parts of Judaism.

We hope you will join us at 7 pm on Monday, July 19th.

Rabbi Rachel Bat-Or
Dr. David Frolich

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*Save the Date!*

**Marc Rosengart's Bar Mitzvah**  
**August 6-7**  
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PARASHAT MATTOT-MASEI

Numbers 30:2-32:42

Numbers 33:1-36:13

This week's Torah commentary is by Sam Berrin Shonkoff who is currently the Jewish student life coordinator at Stanford Hillel. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Religious Studies from Brown University and has also studied in Jerusalem at Hebrew University, Pardes Institute and The Conservative Yeshiva.

Coping with Complexity - Awareness of the wholeness in the Torah opens our eyes to the wholeness of the world.

The child in me wants to hide Parashat Mattot and Parashat Masei in a dusty attic somewhere; so many of their words are disillusioning, disturbing, and embarrassing. Parashat Mattot begins with sexism: all men must keep their promises, yet women's promises may be nullified by disapproving husbands and fathers (Numbers 30). It continues with genocide: in a spirit of revenge, thousands of Israelites invade Midian and kill every man (Numbers 31:7). When they return with captured women, children, and booty, Moses is angry because his soldiers did not do enough. He commands them to kill every non-virgin female and every male child among the captives (Numbers 31:15-18).

This massacre is especially bloodcurdling for those who remember that Moses lived in Midian for a period of his life and that his wife Tziporah and father-in-law Yitro are Midianites. Later, Parashat Masei foreshadows a horrific mission of ethnic cleansing in Canaan: God commands the People of Israel, "You shall dispossess all the inhabitants of the land...And if you do not dispossess the inhabitants of the land, those whom you allow to remain shall be stings in your eyes and thorns in your sides" (Numbers 33:52-55).

How can we meaningfully engage with such indigestible texts that blatantly contradict our contemporary notions of justice? How do we continue to embrace the Torah and proclaim that "all her paths are shalom"? (Proverbs 3:17)

Wholeness in the Torah

Many people choose to evade, rather than to connect intimately with these difficult issues. Some attempt to "purify" problematic passages through creative interpretations and apologetics. Midrash, for example, is a wellspring of such commentaries. Others ignore the problematic texts and focus exclusively on passages that validate their own personal values. Although these two methods sometimes lead to profound commentaries, they ultimately limit the depth of our engagement with Torah. Whether we justify its faults or we fail to behold its wholeness, we, and Torah, are fragmented.

Rather, we must approach the whole Torah with open hearts, displaying enough patience and tenderness to remain in close relation to all of it, even amidst conflict and vulnerability. To look upon its beauty and blemishes, to engage with Torah openly and honestly is to cultivate real and sustainable shalom--the kind that can exist within individuals, in a society, and between nations.

"Peace" is a misleading translation of shalom, for it implies a lack of conflict, an absence of complications. In fact, the etymological root of shalom is shalem--"whole." Shalom is not a state of calm; it is wholeness--a process of opening oneself to the whole story and grappling

with it. Thus, shalom is not peace itself, but the headwater of peace. When we avoid complexity and strive for a black-and-white understanding of reality, we erode the possibility of shalom. Seeing and struggling with the Torah's most disturbing faces--even when it elicits emotional responses like shame, anger, and sadness--can actually elucidate our deepest values and can help us identify our own ethical and moral orientations. Our productive indignation over unjust texts motivates us to take action on these issues in our own lives.

Wholeness in the World

The pursuit of global justice requires us to apply this notion to the world itself. We should strive to be aware of what is happening around the globe--the pleasant and the tragic, the heartwarming and the chilling. It can be excruciating to learn about the oppression, poverty, and epidemics that persist every day. This is why so many of us turn away. How else could the genocide in Darfur possibly be entering its seventh year without a stronger degree of international intervention? How else could millions of human beings die of hunger every year while others of us have excess? How else could diarrhea, the most preventable and treatable childhood illness, kill 4,000 children per day? If we skip over those painful "texts" in newspapers and on the news, if we choose ignorant bliss over actual awareness, then we stunt the growth of shalom. And where there is no shalom, there can be no peace.

To practice shalom in the world, we must extend beyond a passive awareness of international issues. It is relatively easy for us to learn about and respond emotionally to events, but knowledge without action falls short of wholeness. Our real challenge is to integrate our intellectual and physical selves, to rise up and do something once we are aware. The world will not change, and neither will we, if we sit still, steeped in thoughts and feelings.

It may seem easier in the short term to ignore complexities, but this alienates us from reality. To neglect shalom weakens us as activists and undermines the wholeness of Torah, the world, other people, and ourselves.

Here we conclude the book of Numbers, B'midbar, "In the Wilderness." The People of Israel stands on the banks of the Jordan, in the final days of their wanderings. They yearn to enter Jerusalem, Yerushalayim--another word rooted in shalem, wholeness. Like them, we still need to gaze across the waters, to find our way, to move ever closer to justice and to peace.

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

