



BET MENORAH . . . now!

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

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UPCOMING EVENTS

- Adult Education Session(see back page) . . 18:00 Thurs 16 February
- Torah Breakfast 9:00 Sat 18 February
- Womens World Day of Prayer 18:00 Fri 2 March
followed by Share-a-Shabbat Supper
- Purim 18:00 Wed 7 March
- Torah Breakfast 9:00 Sat 17 March

I'm at present reading a most absorbing intimate narrative of Israel's leadership - "The Prime Ministers" by Yehuda Avener.

Menachen Begin, who led the brutal fight against the British in Palestine and negotiated the historic peace treaty with Egypt, lived by an iron rule :

"A Jew must never lift a finger against a fellow Jew, NEVER"

"A Jew must never shed the blood of another Jew, NEVER"

It is a shame and a disgrace that these young ultra-orthodox zealots don't heed the words of those brave idealists who fought for the establishment of the State of Israel which has given them the opportunity to be free to practice their Judaism.

I am also deafened by the silence of most of the orthodox rabbinate in this country condemning the actions of these ultra-orthodox zealots.

Chips

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"If I try to be like him, who will be like me?"

--- Yiddish Proverb



Highlights of the Parshiot for February/ March (Shevat / Adar 5772)



17/18 February -**Mishpatim** - **Shabbat Shekalim** Exodus 23:14 - 24:18 & Exodus 30:11-16 **Haftarah** Jeremiah 34:8-22 & 33:25,26

This section contains two references of particular interest, the first in Ex. 23:20, where God announces that an angel would be sent with the Israelites to escort them on their desert journey, one who carries God's name (presumably his authority) within him. Later God shows himself to Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu (Aaron's sons) yet, despite what other parts of the Torah have led us to believe concerning the lethal consequences of beholding God's presence, we are told in Ex. 24:11 that "He did not raise His hand" against them. It is perhaps significant that the Hebrew word used for "God" in this instance is not the divine name but the more generic "elohim", a plural literally meaning "divine powers". One might conclude from this that our protagonists did not see God himself but rather the heavenly host, since "elohim" is occasionally used to refer to angels as well. Yet the text makes it clear that a single subject is meant, begging the question why the four men did not instantly drop dead at the sight? Is it possible that they saw God as the heavenly host instead, that is, God presenting himself as a plurality of angelic beings? If so, the same reasoning could apply to the "angel" sent by God to accompany the Israelites (and to all the other cases of angelic appearance in the Bible), namely that it was really God as well, yet as a kind of avatar of himself. Traditionally Jewish sages have shied away from this kind of thinking for fear of conflation with the Christian notion of the Trinity, but as long as we retain the distinction between God's essential, unified nature and his appearance in whatever form or number he wishes, we can gain valuable insights into the all-encompassing nature of the divine, both in literal and philosophical terms.

24/25 Feb **Terumah** Exodus 27:1-19 **Haftarah** 1 Kings 5:26 - 6:13

"Terumah" is the name given to the portion of any sacrifice, brought by an Israelite, granted to the officiating priest and his family for sustenance, and to this day the Hebrew verb "taram" means "to donate". Appropriately, the Biblical section entitled "Terumah" deals in part with sacrifices, and particularly with the construction of the sacrificial altar meant to operate within the Tabernacle precinct. In reading this portion, we are reminded that the roots of Judaism lie, as with almost all ancient religions, in the practice of animal sacrifice, possibly even human sacrifice at a very early stage. Of course, today we are not only unable to continue this tradition, due to lack

of a properly-located Temple, but most of us would be reluctant to support its resumption even if this were to become possible. Content with the more austere form of rabbinical Judaism created and shaped over the course of two thousand years of exile, we would no doubt feel uncomfortable transposing our devotion to a slaughterhouse, and celebrating our feasts and festivals with a regular bloodletting. Yet we cannot wholly ignore the image of a God that once delighted in the "pleasing odour" of burning flesh, and ordered the slaughter of thousands of animals at a time for this purpose. Was this merely the projection of primitive men inhabiting a superstitious age, or a true reflection of the divine nature, not always expressing itself through just the positive qualities of love, mercy and compassion?

2/3 March **Tetzaveh Shabbat Zachor** Exodus 29:29 - 30:10 and Deuteronomy 25:17-19 **Haftarah** Ezekiel 43:10-27

We continue our exploration of the sacrificial tradition in this portion, which notably speaks to the custom of daily sacrifices at sunrise and sunset. As we know, with the destruction of the Temple the bringing of sacrifices was replaced with the offering of prayers instead, this being the so-called "service of the heart" meant to convey the same intent in a more cerebral manner. As a result, traditional Judaism is most frequently put into practice via the daily recitation of the shacharit, mincha and ma'ariv prayers, the afternoon addition based primarily on the description of the prophet Daniel (in the eponymous Bible book) daily retiring to his private chamber at midday to pray. Over the centuries the format of the prayers has become fixed, with the Shema recited at sunrise and sunset (along with its appropriate blessings), and the Shemonei Esreh (or "eighteen benedictions") prayer said on all three occasions. Of course, in the Reform tradition this custom has largely been abrogated, with any expression of religiosity now reserved purely for Shabbat, if that. Perhaps this is why traditional Reform Judaism seems steadily to be losing ground to greater religious conservatism worldwide, as people seek out a more stringently-expressed sense of their religious identity (not to mention the increasing number of "secular Jews" drifting away from their religious tradition entirely). Contrary to what some may think, we do not always welcome the easy path and the effortless way, but sometimes seek out greater responsibility, for it is in this that we find a sense of genuine meaning and value. So perhaps it is time for Reform Jews too to return to a daily prayer regimen, lest the movement itself either fades away entirely or becomes devoid of religious substance altogether.

This section contains a sharp warning to the Israelites concerning the dangers of mixing with other tribes and peoples, as this is expected almost inevitably to lead to an abandoning of their own religion in favour of those of the foreigners. Indeed, the common thread binding many of the Biblical commandments is the goal of reinforcing in the minds of the Israelites the notion of separation, thus to avoid their intermingling and intermarriage with those not of their faith, and hence the almost certain loss of that faith. And while Jews are not particularly known for converting to other religions, in our own day a great many have turned away from religion altogether, with even the would-be "Jewish state" of Israel sporting a mostly secular population. Within a Biblical framework this would almost certainly bring about a divine punishment, yet many secular Jews worldwide are actually quite successful, as is Israel itself. This makes it difficult to grasp the significance of continuing to adhere to religious Judaism, and poses a distinct challenge to those for whom the practices of religious observance is a burdensome endeavour to begin with. Viewed within the context of dwindling participation in regular religious ritual within our own community, it is not untoward to wonder whether there is still any sense in maintaining religious Judaism, and a religious community, at all. Is mere tradition strong enough and rewarding enough to keep people tied to their synagogues, or should we rethink our relationship with our religion altogether?

PURIM

Purim is celebrated by the reading of the Scroll of Esther, known in Hebrew as the Megillat Esther, which relates the basic story of Purim. Under the rule of King Ahashuerus, Haman, the King's prime minister, plots to exterminate all of the Jews of Persia. His plan is foiled by Queen Esther and her cousin Mordechai, who ultimately save the Jews of the land from destruction. The reading of the megillah is typically a rowdy affair, punctuated by booing and noise-making when Haman's name is read aloud.

Purim is an unusual holiday in many respects. First, Esther is the only Book of the Bible in which God is not mentioned. Second, Purim, like Chanukah, is viewed traditionally as a minor festival, but elevated to a major holiday as a result of the Jewish historical experience. Over the centuries, Haman became the embodiment of every anti-Semite in every land where Jews were oppressed. The significance in Purim lies not so much in how it began, but in what it has become - a thankful and joyous affirmation of Jewish survival against all odds.

Lay leadership are scheduled to lead the following services:

February

Fri 10th - Wilfred Lautenberg

Fri 17th - Giddy Lief

Sat 18th - Torah Breakfast - Johan Viljoen

Fri 24th - Johan Viljoen

March

Fri 2nd - Giddy Lief & Sisterhood (Womens' World Day of Prayer)

Wed 7th - Purim - Johan Viljoen

Fri 9th - Wilfred Lautenberg

Fri 16th - Johan Viljoen

Sat 17th - Torah Breakfast - Johan Viljoen

Fri 23rd - Giddy Lief

Fri 30th - Wilfred Lautenberg

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:

March

Eda Cohen

Merle Karp

Jarred Rauff

Melissa Spitz

Patti Zway

Cicely Hurwitz

Genevieve Lautenberg

Moshe Simwawa

Tania Webster

Zeno Jacobs

Alan Lyons

Mark Spitz

Sandra Worms

A very Happy Birthday to all members who celebrated their birthdays during this month.

WELL WISHES TO

Eleanor Patterson who is recovering from a fall

MAZELTOV TO

Allen and Jennifer Joss on the occasion of their granddaughter's Batmitzvah and grandson's Barmitzvah in New York, USA.

Len and Audrey Klein on the occasion of their granddaughter's Batmitzvah in Denver, USA

CONDOLENCES TO

Daniela de Miranda and family on the passing of Daniela's mom

Yahrzeits in Memoriam

Yahrzeits will be announced and Kaddish will be recited on Friday evenings which follow at services which begin at 6.00 pm

12 Feb till 18 Feb 19 Shevat till 25 Shevat

Levi Dison - Father of Dorothy Spitz
Elsa Tucker - Mother of Ivor Tucker

19 Feb till 25 Feb 26 Shevat till 2 Adar

Ephraim (Lou) Segal - Father of Patti Zway
Ray Klein - Mother of Rhona Lief & Len Klein
Boris Berman - Father of Merle Cohen

26 Feb till 3 March 3 Adar till 9 Adar

Rachel Noick - Mother of Barney Noick
Meyer Lautenberg - Father of Wilfred Lautenberg
Philip Abraham Hack - Husband of Ruth Hack

4 March till 10 March 10 Adar till 16 Adar

Lionel Sive - Brother of Ivan Sive
Sophie Eve Lang - Sister of Ivan Sive
Woolf Sive - Father of Ivan Sive
John Wilson - Father of Eleanor Patterson
Seymour Hope

Think about honouring your loved one with a gold-inscribed wooden board for a donation of R250. It will be displayed on the Memorial board

WOMENS WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

The theme this year is 'Let Justice Prevail'.

Join us in marking this important date at Bet Menorah on Friday, 2 March. Merle Karp will be our guest speaker and the service will be followed by a Share-a-Shabbat Supper. Please phone the office to co-ordinate catering.

In February the Bet Menorah Adult Education Committee will continue its series of study sessions devoted to Jewish themes and aimed at providing a venue for congregants to improve their knowledge of Judaism with regard to both theory and practice.

This month's session will take place on Thursday, 16 February from 18:00 to 19:00

It will consist of a lecture by Mark Humphreys on the origins of Christianity in relation to Judaism and the Jewish world.

Refreshments will be served, and all congregants are encouraged to attend.

Join the South African Union for Temple Sisterhoods for a supper and fun Quiz evening on Saturday, 18 February. The tickets are R100.00 per person. For further details and transport arrangements, please contact Giddy 082 443 0898 / 012 460 5308

NEXT ATTRACTION: Pesach