
the Shofar



Etz Chayim Conservative Synagogue's Monthly Newsletter

MAY, 2018

IYYAR/SIVAN, 5778

Friday evening services begin at 7:30 p.m.
Saturday morning services begin at 9:30 a.m.

FROM THE RABBI

FIFTY YEARS OF SOCIAL REVOLUTION

Since the 1960's we have been living in "the therapeutic age." We all recognize the broad outlines: Repression of desires is bad, indulgence in our impulses is healthy. Shame is out and self-expression is in. The public confession of our flaws and peccadilloes is a good thing (Oprah Winfrey is part of this spectrum, and if that's too tame you can consider Jerry Springer). Personal satisfaction, self-esteem and happiness are the paramount goals.

Much of this was documented a half-century ago in "The Triumph of the Therapeutic" by the social scientist Philip Rieff. The book's main argument is conveyed its final sentence: "That a sense of well-being has become the end, rather than a by-product of striving after some superior communal end, announces a fundamental change of focus in the entire cast of our culture." It really is about me after all!

It has been 50 years since 1968, arguably the most turbulent year in the past century's most turbulent American decade. And it has been 50 years since I've been in the rabbinical endeavor (I entered the Seminary that September). In other words, I began my rabbinical career just as the time-honored and respected principles of religion were beginning to undergo a massive change. Self versus community. Pleasure versus responsibility. Convenience versus virtue. Immediacy versus a sense of history. Vulgarity versus modesty.

Now, dear friends, this article is not a lament. I don't see our country drowning in a mindless bacchanalia. Organized religion, frankly, is down but it is not exactly imploding. Moreover, I would insist that a lot of social changes over the past 50 years have been for the good. And yet it is precisely for that reason that I want to jot these few lines in recognition of that which seems to be getting lost in our society. Family, faith, tradition, trust, patience, patriotism — those are strong

concepts that are at the heart of religion and that have been in large measure undermined by the spirit of the age. My modest suggestion is that we keep welcoming the best of social progress, but that we not lose our moorings in what we might call (for want of a better term) that old-time religion. There *were* a lot of wholesome values that lasted from time immemorial until the 1960s. It is our job to keep those values alive, and to pass them on to children and grandchildren.

How has your Judaism, and your America, changed for *you* in the past 50 years? I'd like to hear from you! In any case, have a wonderful month of May, a wonderful summer, and I look forward to praying, studying and growing with you, starting all over again on Rosh Hashanah.

Contact me at slistfield@aol.com, and please know that I'll be thinking of you all through the summer.

Stephen Listfield

SHAVUOT, 5778
From Rabbi Listfield

Happy Shavuot! This year the holiday begins Saturday night, May 19 and concludes with nightfall on Monday, May 21. Here is a brief review of this holiday that is known as *z'man matan Torateinu*.

What is Shavuot?

Shavuot (Feast of Weeks)

commemorates the revelation of the Torah on Mt. Sinai to the Jewish people and occurs on the 50th day after the 49 days of counting the Omer. Shavuot is

one of the three biblically based pilgrimage holidays known as the **shalosh regalim**. It is associated with the harvest of the season's first fruits in the Torah.

How is Shavuot celebrated?

Shavuot is observed by abstaining from work and attending synagogue services. There are a few special readings: a liturgical poem called Akdamut, which emphasizes the greatness of God; the Book of Ruth, because the story highlights one woman's choice to join the Jewish people and accept the Torah; and most importantly, the Ten Commandments, in honor of the revelation of the Torah. It is also customary to study Torah all night; this practice is called Tikkun Leil Shavuot.

What kinds of foods are eaten on Shavuot?

Traditional holiday meals on Shavuot center around dairy foods. Milk is considered to be a symbol of the Torah, which nourishes the people directly, as milk does for a baby. Popular Shavuot foods include cheesecake, blintzes, and kugels. Some Sephardic Jews make a seven-layered bread called *siete cielos* (seven heavens), which is supposed to represent Mt. Sinai.

What is the proper greeting for Shavuot?

The greeting for Shavuot is "Chag Sameach!" (Happy Holiday). People who favor Yiddish say "Good yontiff."

See the full post:

<https://toriavey.com/what-is-shavuot/#TGTzchTyQGL5gk6w.99>

FROM THE PRESIDENT

My second year of service as your President is coming to an end. This means two things. First, there is a Congregational Meeting on Tuesday, June 12 at 6:30 PM to elect the officers for next year and to approve the budget for the coming year. There may be other business to come before the congregation as the by-laws committee should have a final proposal to present for ratification. There will be formal notification for the meeting, but it would be good to get this on your calendar now.

The second is that I get to join the roster of Congregation Past Presidents. As for the election of new officers and board members for next year, if you are interested in serving, please let me know at President@etzchayim-hvs.org, and I will pass the information on to the nominating committee.

ברוך
Barry Meyer

BOOK CLUB MEETING MAY 1

The next meeting of the Etz Chayim Book Club will be on Tuesday, May 1 at 11:00 AM at the synagogue. We'll discuss "Gideon's Spies: The Secret History of the Mossad," by Gordon Thomas.

The club is open to anyone who would like to read and learn from nonfiction books that are related in some way to Judaism. Give it a try. If you'd like to see one of our discussions come on May 1st even if you haven't read this book. It will give you a glimpse of how the club works as well as a say in what we read next.

If you have any questions, contact Jon Berger. Call or text at 256-457-0277 or email at jonaberger@gmail.com.

SISTERHOOD

Greetings Everyone,

We are planning a lunch bunch in May, and members will be informed of the where and when.

The Passover Seder was a big success (as it usually is). There were 67 people, and I understand that the food was delicious. Thanks to all who worked so hard to organize it. Brenda took the reservations and the checks, Holly cleaned the kitchen and made it Kosher for Passover, Millie and Shirley set the table, did the shopping, and coordinated with Mushky on the food, Lauren prepared the Seder plates and Nannette coordinated the serving and clean-up. Thanks to all of you and anyone else that I might have left out.

If you are interested in being on the Sisterhood Board next year, please let me know. We would love to have some new ladies.

Natha

ONEGS

Apr 27	Kalachman
May 04	Meyer/Wiederecht/Persons
May 11	Edmondson
May 18	Hall
May 25	Meyer

Jun 01 Berry

DONATIONS

From: Rose Schneier
To: Bill & Dorothy Goldberg
To: All Her EC Friends
A special gift was made to American
Friends of Magen David Adom.
Best to all my Etz Chayim friends!

Sisterhood Fund

From: Janet Schindler
To: Harriet Sacks - Glad that you are out
of the hospital and feeling much better.
To: Dorothy Goldberg - Very glad that
you are making a good recovery from
your back injury.

Joe Sacks Memorial Fund

From: Dr. & Mrs. Alan Sacks, Gordon
Sacks & Harriet Sacks
A beautiful silver Torah Breastplate.

Outdoor Lighting Fund

In Memory of Gertrude and Perry Schlein
from their daughters Natha Hancock and
Robin Slomka and their families.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Apr 29 JFHNA sponsored Yom
HaAtzma'ut Program, Israel's
70th Birthday, at EC at 1:30 PM
May 01 EC Book Club at 11 AM
May 4-6 Rabbi Listfield Shabbaton
May 05 EC & TBS Joint Shabbat
Service honoring Jewish
Veterans & Farewell to Rabbi
Bahar, at EC, 10 AM

BIRTHDAYS

May 04 Caiden Johnson
May 05 Jonathan Persons
May 08 Diana Polin
May 15 Sandra Wiederecht
May 20 Glenn Polin
May 21 Amy Mauldin
May 22 Gina Yalowitz
May 23 Jordan Hall
May 25 Larry Levitt
May 26 Warren Novick
May 28 Jeff Yalowitz
May 29 Joe Johnson
May 31 Brenda Liles
May 31 Sarah Sacks

ANNIVERSARIES

May 20 Shayna & Joe Johnson
May 25 Lauren & Steve Goodman

Yahrzeits**

Apr 29 Iyyar 14 Perry M. Schlein*
Apr 30 Iyyar 15 Sarah Kauffman*
May 01 Iyyar 16 Ruth Cohen*
May 01 Iyyar 16 David Kopkin
May 03 Iyyar 18 Al Meyer
May 04 Iyyar 19 Anna Polin*
May 04 Iyyar 19 Alex E. Streit*
May 05 Iyyar 20 Jack Greenberg
May 06 Iyyar 21 Irwin M. Schindler
May 06 Iyyar 21 Richard Harris
May 08 Iyyar 23 Aaron Rodkin*
May 09 Iyyar 24 Betty Kamisher*
May 09 Iyyar 24 Elaine Ornstein
May 10 Iyyar 25 Morris J. Green*
May 10 Iyyar 25 Rita Fleishman*
May 11 Iyyar 26 Linda Lindy*
May 11 Iyyar 26 Lawrence Kamisher*
May 12 Iyyar 27 Renee Fisher

May 16 Sivan 02 Adolph Karmioli*
May 16 Sivan 02 Aaron M. Novick
May 18 Sivan 04 Rose Sacks*
May 21 Sivan 07 Rose Rosenthal*
May 21 Sivan 07 Irving Sainker*
May 24 Sivan 10 Molly Meyer
May 29 Sivan 15 Harry Kaufman*
May 30 Sivan 16 Myrna Klazmer
May 31 Sivan 17 Harriet B. Schlein*

* Plaque

**Light Memorial candle sunset of previous evening

DON'T FORGET THE WOMEN

By Ted Roberts

Have you ever noticed in our Chumash the huge positive prejudice toward women? It's hard to miss – and yet there's a wave of scholars and kibitzers who criticize us for our denigration of the female species. A silly judgment that ignores the surrounding world of 2000 BC and the cultural judgment that women were chattel. Into this storm of injustice Judaism introduced the notion that Eve and her sisters were not like sheep or goats, as was the view of pagan nations among whom we lived. According to their primitive mores, the two top professional opportunities were scrubwoman and Temple prostitute. Pagan women encountered in the antique annals of the time compare poorly to our aggressive matriarchs and others such as Deborah, Hulda, Yael, and Judith.

To restate simply, the Tanach and its attitudes must be judged in its time – not by today's. You must not expect a smart young lady to crash through the glass ceiling and build the Temple or lead the Israelites into battle. Amazons they were not. And ceilings were steel, not glass.

To revive an old, but apt expression, generally they were “mothers in Israel.” And consider their role as opposed to the patriarchs. When it comes to plain ol' honesty and goodness, I'd take Jacob's Rachel and Leah over Jacob any day of the week. Morally, behaviorally (is that not what pleased G-d?)

True, his mother Rebecca has a fleeting flirtation with deception as to Isaac's inheritance, but we can forgive that since it's motivated by maternal love.

And Miriam, who guided us through the wilderness, certainly must have pleased G-d over Aaron, who had his weaknesses. Remember he had a fixation on golden calves when Moses was out of town negotiating with the celestial King of Kings.

And talk about Moses – our peerless leader whose morality is impeccable – the most saintly of the Pentateuchal cast. Even Moses – if you compare him to Zipporah – has a bad day or two. In fact, you might say that this woman – lauded by Torah – daughter of a Priest of Midian – not even a Jewess – has her moment of triumph. She saves the life of Moses when at the sight of a vengeful G-d, she abruptly circumcises their son. This must be the most mysterious, enigmatic series of verses in our holy text. G-d seeks to kill Moses? (Why? Because he didn't circumcise Gershom, say most scholars.) Remember he had a killer job. After all, he had to satisfy our stiff-necked ancestors. Constant meetings, tense parleys with Pharaoh, and meetings with the Boss himself – you didn't want to be late for that appointment! Gershom's circumcision? Maybe next week.

Zipporah, in the midst of this encounter, grabs a sharp flint and performs the job of the Mohel and flings the foreskin at “his” feet. Whose feet? Moses? Or an anthropomorphic G-d? “You are a husband of blood,” she shrieks. Zipporah saves the day. A most puzzling passage, which scholars have indigestibly chewed upon for years. But our present concern is to point out the omnipotent role of women in our Bible. And here is a significant example. Without Moses to guide them, our leaderless ancestors may have ended up in Sudan. Certainly not a land of milk and honey. And some commentators say Moses chose her because she was of a desert tribe who knew the Sinai.

Throughout our Chumash women are not only depicted with tenderness, but importance. We have the sons of Jacob and we have his single daughter – Dinah. We meet Ruth the Moabite and her unswerving loyalty to her mother-in-law, clearly a text asking for tolerance – even to Israel’s enemies. And let’s not forget heroines like Yael and Judith and the prophetesses like Deborah who basically judged the fledgling nation. We value our women. May it continue.

Ted Roberts, “The Scribbler on the Roof,” is a syndicated Jewish columnist and longtime member of our Synagogue. Buy Ted’s collected works at Amazon.com or the Sisterhood Gift Shop. Ted welcomes your comment and/or critique and can be emailed at:
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