

Summer Learning with Rabbi Uhrbach Thursdays at 6 pm (beginning June 25)

Join us for a close study and spirited discussion of the Book of Genesis (Bereshit)
100 Redwood Road, Sag Harbor
Open to everyone; come to any or all sessions.

There are still opportunities to sponsor Kiddush this summer.

June 27--July 4 --August 1 -- August 29 --September 5

Please join us for the next

Shabbat Dinner at the Rabbi's Home -- June 26th

Sponsored by Frances and Ed Gotbetter

RSVP by June 23rd

Candle Lighting Friday, June 19 8:06 pm

Kabbalat Shabbat Services 6:30 pm

100 Redwood Road, Sag Harbor

For directions to Rabbi's home go to:

<http://www.synagoguehamptons.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/04/directions-to-100-redwood-road.pdf>

Shabbat Morning, Services 9:30am

Old Whaler's Church

Birchat HaChodesh –Tamuz (Rosh Chodesh, Monday June 22)

Parashat Sh'lach Lecha

Annual: Numbers 13:1 – 15:41 Etz Hayim, p. 840

Triennial: Numbers 14:8 – 15:7 Etz Hayim, p. 845

Haftarah: Joshua 2:1 – 24 Etz Hayim, p. 857

Thoughts on Sh'lach Lecha

Opening up to a wider, less fearful view by Rabbi Amy Eilberg

One commentator on the biblical text exquisitely captures the difference in this story between the perspective of fear and the perspective of faith. Rabbi Y. Eiger (quoted in Itturei Torah vol. 5, p. 78) noticed that, in giving the spies their assignment, Moses had said, "Go up...into the hill country, and see what kind of country it is..." (Numbers 13:17-8). Eiger took special note of the text's mention of the hill country, and imagined Moses saying, "See the Land of Israel from the perspective of the generations, from the view of eternity, in the air of the summit, of ascent, of loftiness."

From the grand perspective at the top of the mountain, with awareness of the role of this land in the history of the people of Israel and in the heart of God, they would surely see possibility, a future filled with blessing. From that height, they would know that they could overcome the challenges on the ground. Instead, the spies, overwhelmed by fear, saw only the lowly, limited perspective: "We looked like grasshoppers to ourselves, and so we must have looked to them." (13:33)

Perspective makes all the difference. How much of our lives do we live stuck at the foot of the mountain, able only to see how large are the challenges we face and how great the risks? From this place, we ourselves feel diminished: Like a small child in a room full of adults, we feel ourselves dwarfed and overwhelmed. It is only when we are able to climb to "the top of the mountain," the place of broader perspective, that we can see possibilities in the midst of threat, opportunity in the midst of challenge. Only in this expanded state of mind can we find ourselves saying, "We can do it."

In a situation in which only fear and confusion are visible, it can be extremely useful to literally climb a mountain in order to cultivate a change in perspective. A walk among the giant redwoods or an hour at the

beach with the roar of the sea in the background can put us in touch with a larger story, within which the day's challenge looms not nearly so large. An hour spent in prayer with community may do just the same, widening the frame of our perspective. Sometimes a walk around the block, a brief moment to breathe fresh air and listen to the song of the birds is enough to break our fixation on a small piece of the picture, opening us to see possibilities where before there was only fear.

The spies' failure of perspective and courage cost them dearly. As a punishment for their faithless report, the Israelites were sent to wander for 40 years in the wilderness before entering the Land. May we learn from this powerful piece of Torah that there are times when we must climb to a higher place in order to see the full picture of perspective and possibility in our lives.

<http://www.jweekly.com/article/full/8525/shelach-lecha-opening-up-to-a-wider-less-fearful-view/>

Tzitzit

At least since talmudic times (200 B.C.E. - 500 C.E.), rabbis have raised the question of whether women should wear tzitzit. The complex arguments center on the idea that the tzitzit may be considered a "time bound" commandment, meaning that they only have to be worn at certain times. Tzitzit should be worn during the day, but never at night.^{****} Women are traditionally exempted from most time-bound mitzvot, presumably because they have important family duties which would interfere with fulfilling these commandments.

During talmudic times some women did in fact wear tzitzit. "The Sages...claim [that women are] obligated [to wear tzitzit]... It is interesting to note that at least two later talmudic rabbis tied tzitzit on the garments of their wives because, like the Sages, they held that tzitzit is a non-time-specific commandment..."⁶ Fifteen hundred years ago the argument that women were not only allowed but required to wear tzitzit was already being promulgated. http://www.utoronto.ca/wjudaism/contemporary/articles/Tallitot/a_shulman_herz_1.html

Our sedra ends with one of the great commands of Judaism - *tsitsit*, the fringes we wear on the corner of our garments as a perennial reminder of our identity as Jews and our obligation to keep the Torah's commands:

G-d spoke to Moses, telling him to speak to the Israelites and instruct them to make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments for all generations. Let them attach a cord of blue to the fringe at each corner. That shall be your fringe: look at it and recall all the commandments of the Lord and observe them, so that you do not stray after your heart and eyes which in the past have led you to immorality. You will thus remember and keep all my commandments and be holy to your G-d.

So central is this command, that it became the third paragraph of the Shema, the supreme declaration of Jewish faith. I once heard the following commentary from my teacher, Rabbi Dr Nahum Rabinovitch.

He began by pointing out some of the strange features of the command. On the one hand the sages said that the command of *tsitsit* is equal to all the other commands together, as it is said: "Look at it and recall *all the commandments of the Lord* and observe them." It is thus of fundamental significance.

On the other hand, it is not absolutely obligatory. It is possible to avoid the command of fringes altogether by never wearing a garment of four or more corners. Maimonides rules: "Even though one is not obligated to acquire a [four-cornered] robe and wrap oneself in it in order to [fulfil the command of] *tsitsit*, it is not fitting for a pious individual to exempt himself from this command" (Laws of *Tsitsit*, 3: 11). It is important and praiseworthy but not categorical. It is conditional: *if* you have such a garment, *then* you must put fringes on it. Why so? Surely it should be obligatory, in the way that tefillin (phylacteries) are.

There is another unusual phenomenon. In the course of time, the custom has evolved to fulfil the command in two quite different ways: the first, in the form of a *tallit* (robe, shawl) which is worn *over* our other clothes, specifically while we pray; the second in the form of an *undergarment*, worn *beneath* our outer clothing throughout the day. From: Covenant and Conversation <http://www.chiefrabbi.org/ReadArticle.aspx?id=1514>

Shlach Lecha and Kol Nidre

After the third recitation of Kol Nidre, the worshippers remind God of the biblical verse promising forgiveness -- "*The whole Israelite community and the stranger residing among them shall be forgiven, for it happened to the entire people through error*" (Num 15:26). The hazzan repeats the words of Moses after the sin of the Golden Calf: "*Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to Your great kindness, as*

You have forgiven this people ever since Egypt" (Num.14:19. The congregation then responds in God's words: "I have pardoned [them], as you have asked" (Num. 14:20). [The JPS guide to Jewish Traditions](#) by Ronald L. Eisenberg,pg 21.

Taking Challah

When you enter the land to which I am taking you and you eat of the bread of the land, you shall set some aside as a gift to the Lord: as the first yield of your baking, you shall set aside a loaf as a gift; you shall set it aside as a gift like the gift from the threshing floor. You shall make a gift to the Lord from the first yield of your baking, throughout the ages. Numbers 15:18-21

Food and land are tied together in the Torah. The challah, the loaf set aside as a gift, is incumbent upon us only in the land of Israel. The mitzvah we still perform by removing a measure of dough before baking is a rabbinic decree meant to insure that this commandment is not forgotten outside of post-temple Israel.

It was only in the Middle Ages that challah became the term used for the special Shabbat bread. According to food writer Claudia Roden, this designation first appeared in South Germany. In our parasha, challah refers to a loaf.

There is an underlying reciprocity in the act of taking challah. God sustained us with manna in the wilderness; when we enter the land we, in turn, give a portion of our bread to God. The connection between challah and manna is found on our Shabbat table every week. Two challot represent the double portion of manna that fell prior to Shabbat. There are those who extend the symbolism by pointing out that the cutting board represents the ground on which the manna fell and the challah cover represents the protective coat of dew over the manna.

The rabbinic imagination found profound inspiration in the act of taking challah. Genesis Rabbah, citing Numbers 15:20, claims that God too removed challah. When did God do this? When humanity was created.

The human being is the challah of the world:

Rabbi Yossi ben Ketsarta said: Like a woman who mixes her dough with water and separates challah from the very centre, so too a flow would well up from the ground and water the whole surface of the earth (Genesis 2:6) followed by the Lord God formed man from the dust of the earth (Genesis 2:7)

*Genesis Rabbah 14:1*The midrashic reading of Genesis is that just as dough is formed from grains of the earth mixed with water, God formed humanity from a combination of earth and water, not merely from the dust of the ground. Humanity is more than the Pillsbury doughboy; it is challah, physically separated from the rest of creation, the most important part of creation. http://www.kolel.org/blog/2008_06_01_archive.html

Preliminary Thoughts on Father's Day by David Holzel

All it took was a brief but discernible flash of insight and I understood my father through and through. I was staring down at my 2-month-old son on the pediatrician's table, admiring this firstborn of mine, when I noticed some *shmutz*, or dirt, on his chin. A blue flake of *shmutz*. I could have scraped the *shmutz* away lightly with my fingernail. I could have dampened a paper towel in the sink and wiped the *shmutz* off his chin. But I didn't. I wet my thumb with my tongue and rubbed the *shmutz* away.

The realization that this is exactly what my father did to me time after warm, sticky time didn't come after I had dispatched the blue *shmutz*. It didn't occur to me as I was performing the act. The light bulb went on the same instant I decided to do it.

And I did it anyway.

Elie winced, but not like he's going to when he's eight and I start moving my fingers toward my outstretched tongue after seeing some foreign particle disfiguring his cheek. He'll be grossed out. I know, because I was too. The sour smell of fermenting middle age. The feeling of encroachment. But like my father before me, I probably won't know when my son passes the line in his process of individuation when he'd prefer the *shmutz* to my saliva.

Both Father's and Mother's days always seemed like Hallmark holidays to me. So it surprised me when my wife, Sheri, insisted we do it up big on her first Mother's Day, and that we approach my first Father's Day in the same spirit. Well, if that's what we're going to do, I want to justify it by investing the day with some Big Concepts.

When Elie was born in February, I was able to fulfill a longtime wish by placing my hand on his head and reciting the Friday night blessing:

Yesimkha elohim k"efraim ve"chemenashe.

May God make you like Ephraim and Menashe.

Yevarekhekha adonai ve"yishmarekha. Ya"er adonai panav elekha vi"yechunekha. Yisa adonai panav eleikha. Ve"yasem lekha shalom.

May God bless you and guard you. May God show you favor and be gracious to you. May God show you kindness and grant you peace.

I've wanted to do this ever since I heard Jewish educator Ron Wolfson talk about how reciting these *brakhot* (blessings) helped bind his family together. Wolfson made it a ritual to bless his children, even when they resisted. When he was out of town, he'd call home, get each child on the phone and recite the blessing. If the sun was setting at his end and no one was available on the other end of the line, he'd leave the blessing on the answering machine.

Wolfson didn't realize how important the ritual was until he called home one Friday afternoon. He was in a rush and forgot about the blessing. As he was about to hang up, one of his children said, "Dad, can I have my blessing now?"

We began blessing Elie on his first *erev Shabbat* (Sabbath eve). In the weeks that followed, as Sheri and I stumbled less and less over the words, I began to meditate on their meaning, especially the first line designated for sons: "May God make you like Ephraim and Menashe" or, in another translation, "May God give you the blessings of Ephraim and Menashe."

Why Ephraim and Menashe? They were Joseph's sons, Jacob's grandsons. But what distinguishes them from the other brothers in Genesis is that they were the only ones who did not have a fratricidal hatred for each other. Certainly every parent hopes for a little peace among siblings. However, we know almost nothing about Ephraim and Menashe. The Torah doesn't quote them, and the *midrash* (explanatory commentary) is bare. They are completely silent in our literature, yet we bless our sons to be just like them.

I wish Genesis hadn't ended when it did, with the deaths of Jacob and Joseph. I wish it had gone on a bit, detailing the lives of Jacob's grandchildren. We would have seen Ephraim and Menashe interacting with their cousins, their adventures in Egypt when times were good, still a family, not yet split into tribes. We could have seen the traits they exemplified.

Maybe what also distinguished Menashe and Ephraim from the others was their father. Joseph is known in Jewish tradition as *hatzaddik*, the saint. Perhaps it is because of how he and his wife raised their children. The subtext of the blessing is actually a challenge to the blesser: May you have the patience, the strength and the imagination of Ephraim and Menashe's father. That's something worth reminding yourself about every *erev Shabbat*.

To raise an Ephraim and Menashe, you have to hope you were raised as well as you are trying to raise them--or act as if you were. Since the two sons are silent in the text, you must become the text. A little saliva does more than wipe off the *shmutz* on your son's chin. <http://www.ujc.org/page.aspx?id=15758>

Yom Huledet Sameach

Morty Chwatsky

Steve Barnett (belated)

Quote of the Week

One new perception,
one fresh thought,
one act of surrender,
one change of heart,
one leap of faith,
can change your life forever.
by Robert Holden *Shift Happens!*

Shabbat Shalom
Stacy

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