

Rabbi Jan Uhrbach

**Rosh Chodesh Elul -- Minyan**

**Friday, August 21<sup>st</sup> 9 am**

**100 Redwood Rd.**

Hear the sounds of the shofar for the first time this year!  
Bring your shofar!

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**Last CSH Shabbat Dinner of Summer '09**

**at Rabbi Uhrbach's home**

**Friday, August 28th**

sponsored by Sandy Mehl

*with amazing special guests*

**Rabbi Ed Feld and Merle Feld**

**RSVP must be made by August 25th**

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**Please reserve now for the High Holy Days!**

If you did not receive a reservation form by email,  
please go to [www.synagoguehamptons.org](http://www.synagoguehamptons.org)  
and download the form.

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**Dinner and Cabaret**  
**with Cantor Marcos Ashkenazi**  
**SWING TO SOUL**

**at**

**The LAUNDRY Restaurant**

**Monday, August 24<sup>th</sup> 6:30 pm**

**RSVP immediately**

**Proceeds go to benefit the Sag Harbor Food Pantry**

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**Continuing**

LEARNING WITH RABBI UHRBACH

Join us for a close study and spirited discussion  
of the Book of Genesis (Bereshit).  
100 Redwood Road, Sag Harbor; Thursdays, 6-7:30 pm.  
Open to everyone; come to any or all sessions. No charge.

**Candle Lighting Friday, August 21st 7:22 pm**

**Kabbalat Shabbat Services 6:30 pm**

100 Redwood Road, Sag Harbor

*For directions to Rabbi's home:*

<http://www.synagoguehamptons.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/DIRECTIONS-TO-100-REDWOOD-ROAD3.pdf>

**Shabbat Morning, Services 9:30am**

Old Whaler's Church

***Kiddush sponsored by Frances and Ed Gotbetter in honor of Ed's Birthday***

**Parashat Shoftim**

Annual: Deuteronomy 16:18 – 21:9 (Etz Hayim, p. 1088)

Triennial: Deuteronomy 18:6 – 19:13 (Etz Hayim, p. 1088)

Haftarah: Isaiah 51:12 – 52:12 (Etz Hayim, p. 1108)

**Torah Thoughts on Parashat Shoftim**

A prophet is not an oracle: a prophecy is not a prediction. Precisely because Judaism believes in free will, the human future can never be unfailingly predicted. People are capable of change. G-d forgives. As we say in our prayers on the High Holy Days: "Prayer, penitence and charity avert the evil decree." There is no decree that cannot be revoked. A prophet does not *foretell*. He *warns*. A prophet does not speak to predict future catastrophe but rather to avert it. *If a prediction comes true it has succeeded. If a prophecy comes true it has failed.*

The second consequence is no less far-reaching. The real test of prophecy is not bad news but good. Calamity, catastrophe, disaster prove nothing. Anyone can foretell these things without risking his reputation or authority. It is only by the realization of a positive vision that prophecy is put to the test. So it was with Israel's prophets. They were realists, not optimists. They warned of the dangers that lay ahead. But they were also, without exception, agents of hope. They could see beyond the catastrophe to the consolation. That is the test of a true prophet.

to read the entire commentary go to: [http://www.chief Rabbi.org/CR\\_Covenant\\_Conversation.aspx](http://www.chief Rabbi.org/CR_Covenant_Conversation.aspx)

Energy conservation is explicitly a *mitzvah*, a commandment, rooted in the central-for-a-Jewish-ecological-ethic law of *bal tashchit* ('do not waste / wantonly destroy'). This law itself is extrapolated from Deuteronomy 20:19, which enjoins an army from cutting down the enemy's fruit trees during wartime. If we should not cut down even an opponent's trees at a time when doing so might save lives (by denying the enemy cover, or by helping the besieging army to subdue the city that much sooner), the rabbis of old saw the Torah implying that all the more so should we not cut down our own trees, in peacetime, for short-term economic benefit.

to read the entire commentary go to: <http://scherlinders.files.wordpress.com/2009/05/4-fsd-thesis-text-theology-pp-57-72.doc>

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**Elul Musings**

A midrash tells that the letters of Elul stand for the words “Ani leDodi veDodi Li” (I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine.) While Passover, with its freshness, is the time of romance between Israel and the Divine, Elul is a time of mature love, with each partner bringing flaws, memories, and blessings to a long-standing relationship. The “emptying” of self in Elul is not an attempt to rid ourselves of our egos or to become utterly self-sacrificial; it is an attempt to put aside our rigidly held perspectives for a time in order to simply listen: to one another, to the world, to the sacred as we understand the sacred. Through listening, we hope not to erase ourselves but to add to our perspectives, to widen our vision, to become aware of what the beloved needs and how important that is to us. We also hope to feel heard and loved for who we are. From that place, we are able to enter the new year, where we and the beloved together will co-create a new world.

[http://telshemesh.org/tishrei/elul\\_a\\_time\\_to\\_be\\_hollow.html](http://telshemesh.org/tishrei/elul_a_time_to_be_hollow.html)

**from *Jewels of Elul*** <http://www.jewelsofelul.com/>

**Letting the Light In** by Esther Netter

When is the right moment to sit and contemplate the difficult times we encounter? Why don't I just get in touch with those things that are painful to think about, very real, hard to stay focused on? How do I set aside time for inner reflection, slowing down enough to notice those thoughts and feelings that cause discomfort and even agitation.

Elul is a time for thinking about the “whens” the “whys” and the “hows.” It is the new year that affords us this opportunity, even demands it of us. To move forward, to heal, to forgive, to grow so that we are the most and the best we can be for the new year.

A friend, gently encouraging me to ask the “whens, whys and hows”, shared a favorite quote from lyricist Leonard Cohen’s song Anthem:

Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack, a crack in everything  
That’s how the light gets in.  
That’s how the light gets in.  
That’s how the light gets in.

When do we focus on the cracks? How do we heal those cracks in our lives and hearts? Why do we leave those cracks unattended only to grow and deepen? We all have cracks in our lives. Take the time to recognize them and remember, it is through the cracks that the light shines through. May this month bring each of us more light and illumination.

Esther Netter is the executive director of the Zimmer Children's Museum in Los Angeles.

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**God's Loneliness** by Rabbi Menachem Creditor

Regular encounters with death have taught me to look into people's eyes and to hear their words with both urgency and patience. There is such holiness waiting in all people. We need only to listen to their voices.

Birth has taught me that everything we do reverberates in the souls of others. No act is neutral. We have deep power within to heal ourselves and those around us. The human capacity to alter the cosmos can be used - must be used - for good.

I've learned that flaws are holy, that the deepest forms of joy and comfort come after accepting personal vulnerability. And once we learn to see and cherish our own imperfections, we can learn to more honestly accept and love others.

Deep breathing is good.  
Crying is good.  
Laughing is good.

Holding each other is exquisite.  
Granting each other space is healthy.

I've learned that God's loneliness birthed us and is a source of deep love. I've learned that we are never truly alone.

Rabbi Menachem Creditor is the founder of Shefa Network. [www.shefanetwork.org](http://www.shefanetwork.org)

### **Mazel Tov**

To Joan and Paul Schreiber on the birth of their granddaughter Jordan Blake on Friday August 14th

### **Yom Huledet Sameach**

Maia Michaelson

### **"Just came to tell you..."**

Shalom TV, America's National Jewish Cable Television Network, is now on Cablevision's FREE "On Demand

### **Quote of the Week**

...Every text has a context, and the sacredness of the original text is reduced or called into question when it is yanked acontextually from its place of origin into the eisegetical realm of "what we want it to say." Ellen Bernstein expressed this well on the opening page of the first-ever compendium of Jewish-environmental quotations:

**"We must be careful when removing a quote from its context to use for our own benefit. This would be similar to extracting a species from its natural habitat with no regard for the web of relationships in which it lives. Therefore, we urge you, if you are moved by a quote, to go to the text and study, to discover its full meaning."**

<http://scherlinders.files.wordpress.com/2009/05/4-fsd-thesis-text-theology-pp-57-72.doc>

Shabbat shalom and chodesh tov,

Stacy

Stacy Menzer  
President  
The Conservative Synagogue  
of the Hamptons

631 725-8188  
[www.synagoguehamptons.org](http://www.synagoguehamptons.org)

## **A Good Sense of Humour is Simply Divine** The Times - July 2008

The poet WH Auden used to quote the following as one of his favourite examples of Jewish humour. "Maybe," sighed the sage after a lifetime of contemplating human suffering, "it would have been better not to have been born. But how many are so lucky? Not one in a thousand!" From the earliest days, humour seems to have been part of the Jewish personality. The great third-century teacher Rav would always begin his classes in Jewish law with a joke. The Book of Esther, with its terrifying theme of attempted genocide, is nonetheless shot through with as many reversals and misunderstandings as a Whitehall farce. Even the Genesis story of the Tower of Babel contains wonderful touches of Divine humour. Men have decided to build a "tower whose top will reach the heavens". But G-d has to "come down" to see it, so minute is it from the perspective of heaven. Thus is man's hubris mocked. A sense of humour is not something we normally associate with the realm of faith. The religious personality is more likely to be linked in our mind with images of austere puritans or stern, unbending Victorians such as Gladstone, than with storytellers who have a twinkle in their eye.

If religion is a capacity to invest life with ultimate seriousness, then humour is precisely the opposite, an ability to say, "nothing is so serious that we cannot laugh". Jews though, and not only Jews, would disagree. It was Peter Berger, the American sociologist, who put it best when he spoke of the sense of humour as one of the "signals of transcendence" that break through into the human situation and remind us of something beyond. We are part of nature, but there is a dimension of human consciousness that lies beyond nature. We are physical beings, but there are aspects of the human spirit that cannot be reduced to physics - and the ability to understand a joke is one of them. Could a computer have a sense of humour? Probably not. The reason, I would guess, is that humour has to do with our ability to see things differently, to escape from the cage of tragedy, to affirm the freedom of the mind.

What we can laugh at, we can rise above. Perhaps that is why Jews, along with other groups who have suffered much and suffered long, have developed a sense of humour as their defence against despair. Humour has something to do with hope. CS Lewis wrote: "Human life has always been lived on the edge of a precipice... Men propound mathematical theorems in beleaguered cities, conduct metaphysical arguments in condemned cells, make jokes on scaffolds, discuss the last new poem while advancing to the walls of Quebec and comb their hair at Thermopylae." There is something majestic about a human nature that can detach itself from the immediate and float in the free air of the ultimate. And perhaps laughter - our ability not to take ourselves too seriously - is related to our ability to take other things very seriously indeed. Be that as it may, I am moved by the fact that the first child of the covenant was named Isaac, meaning "he who will laugh". His was not an easy life. As a child Isaac was almost killed. As a father he was deceived. For the last years of his life he was blind. However, his ability to laugh was the victory of faith over fate. And humour remains G-d's gift of humanity in a sometimes inhuman world.  
[http://www.chiefrabbi.org/CR\\_Covenant\\_Conversation.aspx](http://www.chiefrabbi.org/CR_Covenant_Conversation.aspx)

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