

Shabbat Nachamu July 31 / August 1

Scholar-in-Residence
Professor Zvi Gitelman

July 31st Dinner and Discussion

“What’s in a Name? The History and Meaning of Jewish Family Names”

Following Kabbalat Shabbat Services 6:30 pm

RSVP by July 23rd

Saturday morning August 1st

“What does being Jewish Mean Today? Worldwide Changes in Jewish Identity”

Zvi Gitelman is Professor of Political Science and Preston Tisch Professor of Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan, where he was also the Director of the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies and Director of the Center for Russian and East European Studies. A specialist on the Jews of Russia and Eastern Europe, he is the author or editor of fourteen books and over 100 articles. A second edition of his book *A Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union since 1881* was recently published in Russian and Japanese. His most recent book is *Ethnicity or Religion? The Evolution of Jewish Identities* (2009) and he is now completing a book on the meanings of Jewishness in post-Soviet Russia and the Ukraine.

Summer Learning with Rabbi Uhrbach

Thursdays at 6 pm

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.

Check out our updated website for more information on upcoming events

www.synagoguehamptons.org

There are still opportunities to sponsor Kiddush this summer.

August 1 -- August 29 -- September 5

Candle Lighting Friday, July 17th 8:01 pm

Kabbalat Shabbat Services 6:30 pm

Shabbat Dinner Sponsored by Bonnie Oglensky and Ira Schwarz

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

Birchat HaChodesh -- "Menachem" Av

Kiddush sponsored by Rana and David Silver

Wednesday July 22 Rosh Chodesh Av

As Av is the month of the destruction of the Temples in Jerusalem, the rabbis said: "When Av comes in, gladness must be dimished." The month is often referred to as *Menahem* (Comforter) Av, either in reference to the divine Father (*av*) who comforts His people following the destruction, or to the Messiah who, tradition says, is to be born on the 9th of Av.

The Nine Days

The days leading up to Tisha B'Av are known as "The Week of Tisha B'Av", or "The Nine Days" by Ashkenazi Jews. Many Jews customarily refrain from eating meat during this period, and some refrain from pleasurable activities such as going to music concerts or swimming. In the three weeks before Tisha B'Av, some Jews do not cut their hair or shave. Weddings are not held during this period.

For more information on the month of Av:

<http://jerusalicious.blogspot.com/2008/07/full-solar-eclipse-rosh-chodesh-av-5768.html>

Wednesday July 29 - Tisha B'Av

Service with the chanting of Eicha
8:30 pm at the Old Whalers Church

Thurs July 30 -- Mincha / Ma'ariv 8:00 pm
100 Redwood Road, Sag Harbor

Parashat Mattot-Massei

Annual: Numbers 30:2 – 36:13 (Etz Hayim, p. 941)

Triennial: Numbers 32:1 – 33:49 (Etz Hayim, p. 949)

Haftarah: Jeremiah 2:4 – 28; 3:4; 4:1–2 (Etz Hayim, p. 973, 976, 977)

Torah Thoughts – Mattot-Massei

This parashah contains perhaps the most chilling three-word phrase in the Bible. We rarely pay much attention to this passage: in Orthodox worship, it is chanted in Hebrew and rarely discussed; in Reform and Liberal practice, where we generally do not read the entire parashah, a more uplifting set of verses like those about the "cities of refuge" is understandably preferred. But it is there in our *Tanakh*, part of our Torah, our sacred tradition, and we need to confront this material rather than pretend it does not exist.

The passage describes an expedition of vengeance or retribution, commanded (according to the Biblical text) by God (Num. 31:1-2), against the Midianite nation that had in previous chapters caused serious problems for the Israelites. Moses instructs his people to mobilize 12,000 elite soldiers for the campaign "to wreak God's vengeance on Midian" (31:3). Stunningly successful, they slew every male, including five members of the royal family and the pagan prophet Balaam (4:7-8). They burned to the ground all the Midianite towns and encampments, and took captive the women, children, flocks and herds (31:9-11)

When Moses came out to meet the victorious Israelite army, he unexpectedly lashed out at them in anger. Why? Here comes the blood-curdling three words: *Hahiyyitem kol nekevah*, "You have left all the women alive!" (31:15). Yet the Midianite women had seduced the Israelites into idolatrous practices (25:1-5). Therefore, Moses gives new instructions: kill

all the male children, kill every married woman, allow only the young female virgins to survive (29:17-18).

What are we to make of this? Commentators have tried to explain this behaviour, most recently the American Conservative Movement's *Ets Hayyim*, which writes that it "can be understood only in light of the Torah's fear that their sexually charged pagan celebrations would continue to distract and entice the young, immature Israelite people." The simple truth is that this passage is unjustifiable, indefensible, horrifying. The Torah here attributes to God and Moses incitement to genocide, long before the term or even the concept existed.

We should remember this when tempted to claim glibly that, unlike the Scriptures of other religions, the Torah's "ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace." With all that is ennobling and life-affirming in the Torah, with all that infused the values of Leo Baeck and Louis Jacobs, of blessed memory, there is also material that has been used to justify the politics of Meir Kahane and Baruch Goldstein. No religious tradition, including our own, is immune to the virus of fanaticism. There are passages in the Torah from which we must register an unambiguous dissent, and affirm our belief that behaviour inspired by such passages, whether in the past or in the present, is wrong.

www.eljc.org/parashot/mattotMassev5766.html

The Bible stresses the power and the solemnity of words, from the opening verses of the Torah, in which God creates a world with words, to the commandment to distance oneself from falsehood, to the repeated emphasis against insulting the convert or the physically handicapped. This emphasis continued in postbiblical Judaism. A word is not merely a sound; it is real, it has substance, with the power to hurt or heal, to elevate or to denigrate. . . . The power of speech is one of the unique gifts of a human being, a power we share with no other creature. In these rules governing vows and oaths, we see that human beings, like God, have the power to make things holy by words, by proclaiming them holy.

(Commentary on *Matot*, in *Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary*, ed. David L. Leiber [New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 2001], p. 941)

http://urj.org/learning/torah/archives/numbers//?syspage=article&item_id=5398

Quote of the Week

"Never accept words meant to hurt. Turn them back because they are the responsibility of the speaker. When you are caught off guard, hold the emotions in silence for a moment and tell them to be still. It takes longer to forget than it does to forgive - and time heals when we give it the power." [Joyce Sequichie Hifler](#)

Shabbat Shalom

Stacy

The Conservative Synagogue
of the Hamptons
PO Box 1800
East Hampton, NY 11937
631 725-8188
www.synagoguehamptons.org

