

CSH Shabbat Services

April 16 | Parashat Achrei Mot / Shabbat HaGadol

9:30 am

Old Whalers Church

April at a Glance

Saturday April 2	Shabbat HaChodesh (Announcing the new month)
Tuesday April 5	Rosh Chodesh Nisan
Saturday April 16	Shabbat HaGadol
Monday April 1	Fast of the First Born (Ta'anit Bechorot)
Monday April 18	Erev Pesach (First Seder in the evening)
Tuesday April 19	Pesach Day I (Second Seder in the evening)
Wednesday April 20	Pesach Day 2
Thursday April 21-Sunday April 24	Chol Hamoed Pesach
Monday April 25	Pesach Day 7
Tuesday April 26	Pesach Day 8

Friday, April 15, 2011 Candle Lighting 7:04 pm (Sag Harbor)

This week's Torah reading: **Aharei Mot**

Annual: Leviticus 16:1 – 18:30 (Etz Hayim, p. 679)

Triennial: Leviticus 16:1 – 17:7 (Etz Hayim, p. 679)

Haftarah: Malakhi 3:4 – 24:3:23 (Etz Hayim, p. 1296)



Musings on Achrei Mot -- After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein you dwelt (*asher yoshavtem ba*), you shall not do, and after the doings of the land of Canaan, where I bring you (*asher ani mayvee etchem shama*) you shall not do, nor shall you walk in their statutes.?
(Leviticus 18:3)

'Go unto Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, for I have hardened his heart and the hearts' of his servants, so I can perform my signs in their midst. And so that you shall tell your children and your children's children'. So begins the Parshah of redemption and the primary mitzvah of the Seder night: to tell the story. It indeed seems from these verses as if the whole purpose of the Exodus is to tell the story.

How are we to understand this idea? An answer may lie in another anomaly, the toast to G-d in the middle of the Hagadah. In the midst of telling the story of the Exodus, we raise our glasses and proclaim that in every generation some one has tried to kill us and G-d has saved us from their hands. What is the purpose of this statement in the middle of the Hagadah? Surely it should come at the end?

An answer can be found in our Parshah, where we are commanded to observe G-d's commands and to 'live by them'. From this verse the Rabbis learnt that all the mitzvot can be broken to save life, except murder, apostasy and adultery/incest. There is, it appears, a religious obligation of Jewish survival. As long as one is able to continue being Jewish, being alive is more important than temporarily transgressing the Torah. A living Jew, it appears, is the greatest witness to G-d's greatness. This, I believe is the meaning of the 'toast to G-d' at the Seder, and indeed the whole story.

The seder is not simply about telling historical events but relating the story of Jewish survival. G-d took us out of Egypt so that in every generation our survival attests to His power. When we sit at the table, and relate the story of the Exodus to our children, three thousand years later, we are

living witnesses to an ongoing miracle. For this reason we relate as part of fulfilling the mitzvah of relating the Exodus, that in every generation G-d has redeemed us. Empires have fallen and nations disappeared, but we are still here. Those that sort to annihilate us are often but footnotes in history, but we live. In this we fulfill G-d's statement that He redeemed us, in order that we should tell our children and grandchildren.

<http://www.ehcong.com/ForthLight/6Aharei68.htm>

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An interesting link between the festival and the weekly reading is the verse in chapter 18, "You shall not do according to the deeds of the land of Egypt where you dwelt" (Lev. 18:3). If all that connected the two was the word "Egypt" this could be dismissed as mere coincidence. But on a deeper level the verse reminds us that the Egyptians oppressed minority groups and this is an example which should be rejected.

Rashi says the ways of Egypt were morally corrupt, not just in the way they treated minorities. He also quotes a rabbinic source that says that the Egyptians followed unacceptable social customs like frequenting theatres and gladiatorial fights. Commentators point out that these were Roman practices, but the cruelty and lack of modesty they entailed certainly come under the heading of moral corruption. Over and above these examples, a number of sources say that the Egyptians blurred the distinction between males and females: males acted in feminine ways and vice-versa., which warns us not to blur the boundaries or to pretend to be what you are not and cannot be. Why is the verse so stern in its warning to the people of Israel? Because Egypt was the first nation with whom the Israelites as a group had any dealings, and the Egyptians must not be seen as a role model worthy of emulation.

<http://www.oztorah.com/2008/04/passover-the-parashah-acharei-mot/>

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"Adonai spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the Israelite people and say to them: 'I am Adonai your God. You shall not copy the practices of the land of Egypt where you dwelt or of the land of Canaan to which I am taking you; *nor shall you follow their laws.*'" (Lev. 18:1-3).

The Kotzker Rebbe seems to understand that whether hats have brims or not is trivial, and debates over external dress irrelevant. It is the spiritual 'clothing' that the Jew must preserve. The genius of Judaism has been its ability to absorb surrounding culture, and 'Judaize' it. One of the key differences between liberal and orthodox approaches to Judaism, is the relationship between Judaism and the outside world, and the attitude to non-Jewish culture. A critical approach to Judaism recognizes that there have been forces that have influenced the 'flavour' of Judaism—that's why Jewish customs from communities around the world differ. Our problem today is that culture is evolving faster than Judaism can handle. We can't wait 200 years to find a way to absorb the outside world but at the same time give it a Jewish flavour. But building a wall against outside culture will only impoverish Judaism, or render it obsolete and irrelevant to the modern world. It's not easy, but the more we are grounded in Jewish sources, traditions and texts, the better we can be at navigating between Judaism and the non-Jewish culture and ideas.

This coming weekend we will sit down at our Seders, as Jewish an experience as anyone can imagine. But the Seder, as we now celebrate it is radically different from the original biblical festival (remember with the bloody door and Paschal offering). It probably did not have the youngest child sing 'Mah Nishtanah' either. The Rabbis, who created the structure of the Seder borrowed motifs from the popular Greek symposium which was a model of intellectual discourse centred around a ceremonial meal eaten while reclining, four cups of wine, philosophical questions and answers. The word 'karpas' and 'afikomen' are Greek. There is even a symposium

recipe for a chopped fruit and nut dish. The Seder is more than a Greek symposium with a Jewish story. There are authentic Jewish elements as well: blessings, the ceremonial foods, Hallel. But clearly the Seder demonstrates how Judaism has survived, and even thrived, by taking the best of the non-Jewish world and 'Judaizing' it.

The Seder is a perfect laboratory for experimenting with this tension: this evening of memory should preserve the family traditions (certain foods, tunes, even a particular serving dish) yet at the same time, provoke curiosity, awaken wonder, and challenge participants (especially children) to think about freedom and redemption in novel, creative, and meaningful ways.

http://www.kolel.org/pages/5765/acharei_mot.html



Additional Readings for the Passover Seder

At the pouring of the fourth cup of wine by Rabbi Burton L. Visotzky

Reject Hate, Embrace Hope, Recommit to Peace!

Traditionally, we fill this cup to welcome the Prophet Elijah, who heralds the start of the Messianic era. For centuries, we have recited Psalm 79:6-7: "Pour out Your wrath on the nations that do not know you and on the kingdoms that do not call upon Your name. They have devoured Jacob and made desolate his dwellings."

In the Middle Ages, Jews invoked this fantasy of divine retribution as a poultice for the wounds inflicted during our long history. This bitterness was understandable, if unproductive. Now we live in a time that we are ostensibly free, yet the nations who actually invoke God's name continue to desolate one another. God's Holy Land is riven by terror and revenge. Jacob's forbears, Isaac and Ishmael, remain gripped in the medieval mind-set. Despair makes us yearn for the arrival of Elijah.

We cannot bear to wait any longer. We cannot endure endless war. Elijah seems but a faint hope, not a solution. Tonight, we open the door to our neighbors, to dwelling with one another in quiet and shared delight. As we open the door we raise our fourth cup in a toast to the fresh breeze of renewed commitment, to the rejection of hate, to embracing hope, and to the hard work of making peace. And, we raise our glasses to life. We pray this "LeChaim," will bring us the longed-for redemption. Let this be the way we welcome Elijah

http://peacenow.org/entries/apn_passover_haggadah_readings



Pesach (Our holiday has an egg too, sans rabbit)

The egg is an underexplained part of the seder plate. We popularly know it as a symbol of spring, which is the season (and in the bible, month, Aviv) of Passover, and of rebirth. It's round shape (actually an oval, which is elliptical) which indicates the cycle of the year and of life.

But it also is a symbol of the Jewish people, according to Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz who...spoke about the egg as the symbol of the Jewish people. Most foods soften as you cook them, but the egg hardens the longer it cooks. We Jews have been subjected to fire for millennia, from the time of Pharaoh to today and yet instead of weakening we have been forged through fire. We are known as an am kshei oref, the stiffnecked people. This has been detrimental when our stiffneckèdness caused us to wander the desert for 40 years. But it has also kept us Jewish. No

matter what the world threw at us, we kept the course. All of these ancient civilizations who tried to destroy us are gone and we are still here. "For in every generation people try to destroy us, but the Holy One, Blessed be He, saves us from their hands."

<http://matrutta.blogspot.com/search?updated-min=2008-01-01T00%3A00%3A00%2B02%3A00&updated-max=2009-01-01T00%3A00%3A00%2B02%3A00&max-results=24>



Two prayers by to accompany the search and nullification of chametz

Hineni

I am present, in body and mind, to fulfill the positive commandment of "On the first day, you shall dispose of hametz from your homes."

As I prepare to destroy all the leavened food in my possession, so I commit to removing all objects and aspects of my life which share distinct features with hametz: clothing I do not wear which might clothe another, tzedakah I am withholding which might sustain another; love I have not shown which might inspire another. I also prepare to challenge my traits of procrastination, selfishness and narrow perspective, arrogance, and fear.

Yehi Ratzon

God, should it please You, help me to grow from the experience of discovering and destroying the hametz from my home and office, my closet and my desk, my heart and my mind. I recognize that I have not done so completely. Regard my efforts as achievements. Help me to turn my mistakes into lessons and to continue this process of purification throughout the coming year.
 This year we are here, next year may we be in Eretz Yisrael. This year we are slaves, next year may we be free.

<http://jewschool.com/2011/04/11/26054/prayers-to-accompany-the-search-for-chametz/>



Yom Huledet Sameach

Michael Jaffe
Jan Uhrbach

End Quote

"This is the bread of poverty that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt.
Let all who are hungry, come and eat.
Let all who are in need, come and share the Pesach meal."

Shabbat Shalom. Chag Kasher v'Sameah.

Stacy