

CSH March Shabbat Service Schedule

March 5 | Parashat Pekudei / Shabbat Shekalim
March 26 | Parashat Shmini /Shabbat Paraha

Friday, March 4, 2011 Candle Lighting 5:26 pm (Sag Harbor)

Shabbat morning 9:30

Shabbat Shekalim

Old Whalers Church

Sag Harbor

Rosh Chodesh Adar II

Sunday, March 6 and Monday, March 7

This week's Torah reading: Pekudei

Annual: Ex. 38:21 – 40:38 (Etz Hayim, p. 552)

Triennial: Ex. 38:21 – 39:21 (Etz Hayim p.552)

Maftir: Ex. 30:11 – 16 (Etz Hayim, p. 523)

Haftarah: II Kings 12:1 – 17 (Etz Hayim, p. 1277)

Chazak, Chazak, V'Nitchazek!

In *Commentary on the Torah*, Richard Elliott Friedman observes that Moses does not speak at all in the last chapter of Exodus. “Thus the book of Exodus ends as it began, with the attention on the people—and their relationship with their God. The person of Moses is the focus of the story in the intervening chapters, but the nature of the opening and concluding chapters would suggest that he is just that: a tangible focus of a larger dynamic, between God and a human community.” (Richard Elliott Friedman, *Commentary on the Torah* [San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2001], p. 310)



Musings on Pekudei – “And these are the accounts of the Mishkan -- the Tabernacle of the Testimony – that were calculated by Moshe.”

A curious midrash relates that when Moses was making an inventory of all the donated materials for the mishkan, he couldn't account for 1,775 silver shekels that had been donated but were nowhere to be found in the final construct. He began to panic and thought: The people will accuse me of being an embezzler! At that moment, God enlightened him and he saw the silver hooks, meant to hold up all the mishkan tapestries, hanging on the beams of the mishkan. This was where the missing silver had gone.

The word “hook” in Hebrew is vav, which also happens to be the sixth letter of the Hebrew alphabet. This letter is actually shaped like a vertical hook; it's a simple straight bar with a protruding head. Not coincidentally, the letter vav serves the same function as a hook: it attaches two things together. Just as a hook attaches a tapestry to a beam or a wall, so does the letter vav serve in Hebrew as the conjunction word “and,” which conjoins phrases and ideas in a sentence.

...When Cain killed Abel, God cursed Cain and consigned him to be a wanderer for the rest of his life. But he also gave him “the sign of Cain,” which was some insignia on his forehead that would remind everyone who he was. What was this symbol? According to the Zohar, it was the letter vav. Why? Rabbi Meir Shapiro (d. 1933) aptly surmised that any person who could ask, “Am I my brother's keeper?” needed to be reminded that there are other people in the world. The letter vav, Hebrew's “and,” needed to be permanently emblazoned on Cain's head to constantly remind him

that he is not the only person — there's me and my brother; there's me and my sister; there's me and the rest of the community. Cain had lost sight of the vavs, and he paid the ultimate price of living the rest of his life with the remorse of having destroyed his brother.

The Shulhan Aruch — the Code of Jewish Law — states that when writing a Torah scroll, it is customary to start each new column of words with the letter vav. The vav reminds us that the Torah is not a disjointed set of disparate ideas, but one unified corpus of Divine literature. The vavs in the mishkan reminded Moses that the Jewish people are not just individuals. Surely, every Jew has an individual tapestry that is colorful and uniquely beautiful. But in order for the tapestry to radiate its beauty properly, it must be hung upon the Tabernacle hooks and become part of the larger edifice, the larger community of the Jewish people.

It is so easy to lose sight of the vavs in our community, especially when each of our voices is so passionate, so unique and so different from the other voices. But without the vavs, we are merely just individual voices; together, our collective voice — if we dare to find it — can bring the Divine Presence back to our community and, ultimately, to the entire world.

http://www.jewishjournal.com/torah_portion/article/recognizing_a_community_parashat_pekudei_exodus_3821-4038_20110301/

Parashat Shekalim

The *nesi'im*, the chieftains, considered themselves above the people. According to the midrash, they heard the call for material donations for the construction of the Tabernacle, and thought they would wait until the ordinary people had stopped giving and then step in, with great fanfare, to complete the missing materials. As it turned out, the people gave an overwhelming amount, more than could even be used, so that the *nesi'im* were left with almost no role to play. They ended up making the small, last minute contribution of the breastplate stones. It is for this reason, says the midrash, that the word *nesi'im* is missing a letter in this section of the Torah, spelled without its usual yod.

The *nesi'im* did not understand what makes a person great, what makes a person a true *nasi*, literally a person who is “lifted up” or “elevated.” In this case, the ordinary people of Israel were *nesi'im*; the Torah calls those who contributed to the Mishkan *ish asher nesa' o libo*, “one whose heart has lifted him up.” What elevated them was that they were not interested in individual glory but in *participating*, making their little contribution to the joint project of the Mishkan. The Torah says they came *anashim al nashim*, “men on top of women,” all in a jumble, not as individuals, but together, running to be part of the group.

This week, in addition to reading about the end of the construction of the Mishkan, we also read the first of the 4 special readings before Passover, called **Parashat Shekalim**. It too delivers the same message of interdependence and community. In it we read about the counting of the people, which was done through the contribution of half-shekels each. Why a half-shekel and not a whole shekel? For counting purposes, it would have been simpler to have a 1:1 correspondence of shekels and people. But no. The message is that none of us stands on her own, a complete entity, able to make a complete contribution on our own. We are all halves, incomplete without another, only whole when we come together.

In describing this half-shekel count, the Torah uses the phrase *ki tisa et rosh*, which literally means “when you raise or elevate heads.” It is not by raising ourselves above others that we are truly elevated, as the *nesi'im* thought; on the contrary, elevation happens by making ourselves a part of each other, forming ourselves into corresponding halves that work together in the building of the Mishkan and the world.

<http://parshathoughtsmore.blogspot.com/>



CSH Membership -- “The Torah calls those who contributed to the Mishkan *ish asher nesa’o libo*, “one whose heart has lifted him up.... And in the end, the Torah attributes the work not to Bezalel, the architect, or even to the craftsmen, but rather to the community as a whole – “Thus was completed all the work of the Tabernacle . . . The Israelites did so” (39:32).

It takes all of us to make CSH the community that it is. Please help strengthen CSH by joining or renewing your CSH membership now.



Purim’s Coming – Send Mishloach Manot

Honor someone(s) special by sending them **VIRTUAL Mishloach Manot** (gifts of food that Jews send to each other during the holiday of Purim.)

Spare your friend and family the calories of hamantashen, chocolate, candy and wine and **make a donation to CSH in their honor instead.**

Send us the names and email addresses of those you wish to honor, and we will send them a Purim box from you.

25% of all donations for these "gift boxes" will be donated to the Sag Harbor Food Pantry to ensure that those less fortunate will have food to eat.



End Quote –

It is customary to recite Chazak, Chazak, V’Nitchazek (“Be strong, be strong, and we will be strengthened”) at the conclusion of each book of the Torah. The poem “Be Strong!” by Maltbie Davenport Babcock, a 19th century Presbyterian pastor, is a fitting commentary on this liturgical exclamation: (http://www.uscj.org/Pekudei_57718523.html)

Be strong!
We are not here to play, to dream, to drift;
We have hard work to do, and loads to lift;
Shun not the struggle—face it; 'tis God's gift

Be strong!
Say not, "The days are evil. Who's to blame?"
And fold the hands and acquiesce—oh shame!
Stand up, speak out, and bravely, in God's name.

Be strong!
It matters not how deep entrenched the wrong,

How hard the battle goes, the day how long;
Faint not—fight on! To-morrow comes the song.

Shabbat shalom.

Stacy