

# **Bridgehampton-Sag Harbor Multifaith Thanksgiving Service & Potluck Dinner**

**Sunday, November 20 at 3:00 pm**

**Old Whaler's Church**

**44 Union Street Sag Harbor**

**All Are Welcome**

*Please bring a donation for our local food pantries*

**Candle Lighting Friday, November 11 4:18 pm**

## **CSH Shabbat Service Schedule**

November 4 – Lech Lecha

November 18 – Chayei Sarah

### **Old Whaler's Community Center**

In December, The Conservative Synagogue of the Hamptons and Temple Adas Israel will join together Shabbat morning for services and Torah study.

December 3 – CSH @ Old Whalers

December 10- Temple Adas Israel

December 17 - Temple Adas Israel

December 24 - CSH @ Old Whalers

December 31 - Temple Adas Israel

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### **This week's parashat: Vayera**

Annual: Genesis 18:1 - 22:24 (Etz Hayim p. 99)

Triennial: Genesis 19:1 – 20:18 (Etz Hayim p. 104)

Haftarah: II Kings 4:1 – 37 (Etz Hayim p. 124)

**Vayera Musings:** Vayera is a particularly troubling parasha with hints of violence that are barely below the surface. Its best-known story is the akedah (binding of Isaac) in chapter 22. But it also contains the story of Hagar and Ishmael being sent away (*Genesis 21*), Sarah being given to Abimelech (*Genesis 20*), and the events at Sodom (*Genesis 19*).

*Classical Jewish texts concur that God did \*not\* destroy Sodom and Gemorrah because their inhabitants were homosexual. Not at all. Rather, the cities were destroyed because the inhabitants were nasty, depraved, and uncompromisingly greedy. Classical Jewish writings affirm that the primary crimes of the Sodomites were, among others, terrible and repeated economic crimes, both against each other and to outsiders. Saying "God killed them because they were gay" is, to say the least, not the Jewish teaching on the subject.*

The men of Sodom waxed haughty only on account of the good which the Holy One, blessed be He, had lavished upon them...They said: Since there cometh forth bread out of (our) earth, and it hath the dust of gold, why should we suffer wayfarers, who come to us only to deplete our wealth. Come, let us abolish the practice of travelling in our land...

There were four judges in Sodom named Shakrai (Liar), Shakurai (Awful Liar), Zayyafi (Forger), and Mazle Dina (Perverter of Justice). Now if a man assaulted his neighbor's wife and bruised her, they would say to the husband, Give her to him, that she may become pregnant for thee. If one cut off the ear of his neighbor's ass, they would order, Give it to him until it grows again.

If one wounded his neighbor they would say to the victim, Give him a fee for bleeding thee [bloodletting was sometimes considered medically beneficial in those days; Here the Sodomite judge cruelly ruled that if one beats you until you bleed, you owe your attacker money for this "beneficial" medical service"...]

<http://iwgonline.com/docs/sodom.html>



Rabbinic legends about Sodom describe an area of unusual natural resources, precious stones, silver and gold. Every path in Sodom, say the sages, was lined with seven rows of fruit trees. Eager to keep their great wealth for themselves, and suspicious of outsiders' desires to share in it, the residents of Sodom agreed to overturn the ancient law of hospitality to wayfarers. The legislation later prohibited giving charity to anyone. One legend claims that when a beggar would wander into Sodom, the people would mark their names on their coins and give him a dinar. However, no one would sell him bread. When he perished of hunger, everyone would come and claim his coin. There was once a maiden who secretly carried bread out to a poor person in the street in her water pitcher. After three days passed and the man didn't die, the maiden was discovered. They covered the girl with honey and put her atop the city walls, leaving her there until bees came and ate her. Hers was the cry that came up to God, the cry that inaugurated the angelic visit and its consequences.

Another famous rabbinic tale mirrors the Greek myth of Procrustes. Both the Jewish and Greek stories are about beds that invert the ethic of hospitality. In Sodom, they had a bed for weary guests upon which they might rest. However, when the wayfarer would lie down, they made sure that he fit the bed perfectly. A short man was stretched to fit it and a tall man was cut to size. The Midrash tells us that Eliezer, Abraham's loyal servant, was once offered to lie upon it but he declined, claiming that since his mother died he pledged not to have a pleasant night's sleep on a comfortable bed. In the Greek myth, Procrustes (meaning "he who stretches") kept a house by the side of the road for passing strangers. He offered them a warm meal and a bed that always fit whomever lay upon it. Once laying upon it, he would likewise cut off the legs of those too long or stretch those too short. Theseus, the hero of the Greek tale, turns the tables on Procrustes and fatally adjusts him to his own bed.

The people of Sodom are not only protective of their wealth and punishing of acts of charity; they are also desperate to force everyone to fit a single measure. They have a well-to-do gated community that makes sure no beggars disturb their luxury and peace. They have zoned out poverty. But what makes Sodom the "right" kind of neighborhood is that no difference is tolerated. "Our kind" of folk are welcomed and protected, while all the rest are excluded or eliminated. It can hardly be incidental that the locus of this one-size-fits-all violence is a bed that serves as a guillotine and a rack. The place of sleep, comfort, and sexual pleasure in Sodom has been transformed into a place of threat and malice, a device of torture for strangers.

Eliezer saves himself from being amputated or stretched by the mourning of his mother. Mourning the dead is a particularly selfless expression of relationship and love. The people of Sodom treat all who are not inside the walls as being as good as dead; Eliezer treats the dead with an honor and presence that makes their memory a living reality. Sodom is a place where compassion is punished brutally, as the story of the young maiden suggests. Eliezer is saved from Sodom's evil not by his sword or cunning, as is Theseus in the Greek myth, but by his own loving beyond all boundaries or benefit-by a loving which, like a mother's love, has no reasons.

To read this article in its entirety go to: [http://www.jewishmosaic.org/torah/show\\_torah/48](http://www.jewishmosaic.org/torah/show_torah/48)

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In [Sunday, January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2011] NYT, Paul Krugman, Nobel Prize winning economist and voice of conscience, stated very clearly the current divide in American politics.

One side of American politics considers the modern welfare state — a private-enterprise economy, but one in which society's winners are taxed to pay for a social safety net — morally superior to the capitalism red in tooth and claw we had before the New Deal. It's only right, this side believes, for the affluent to help the less fortunate.

The other side believes that people have a right to keep what they earn, and that taxing them to support others, no matter how needy, amounts to theft. That's what lies behind the modern right's fondness for violent rhetoric: many activists on the right really do see taxes and regulation as tyrannical impositions on their liberty.

Unfortunately, this is a very old debate, and its not only between Democrats and Republicans. This is the argument of the Sodomites who, according to the prophet Ezekiel, hoarded their resources and refused to allow outsiders in. The Rabbis saw Sodom as the epitome of small minded, harmful greed—greed that eventually leads to its own destruction.

Since the New Deal was passed, when America seemed to recognize its responsibility to its needy citizens as part of its political obligations, the forces of ownership and greed have been pushing back. The politics of Sodom have been gaining ground. Today's "radical" policies, as Krugman points out, are policies that Republicans proposed three decades ago. It is time then, it seems to me, for a primer on the politics of Sodom.

To read this article in its entirety go to: <http://jewschool.com/2011/01/17/25236/the-politics-of-sodom/>

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**Thank You to All Our Veterans  
WE SALUTE YOU AND THANK YOU**



**Chaplain Louis Barish gets in his jeep for a visit to the U.S. Corp troops in Korea, circa 1950**

<http://tinyurl.com/85cxddd>

<http://access.cjh.org/home.php?type=extid&term=210776#1>

November 11, or what has come to be known as Veterans Day, was originally set as a U.S. legal holiday to honor Armistice Day - the end of World War I, which officially took place on November 11, 1918. In legislature that was passed in 1938, November 11 was "dedicated to the cause of world peace and to be hereafter celebrated and known as 'Armistice Day.'" As such, this new legal holiday honored World War I veterans.

Tomorrow is the 11th day of the 11th month. At eleven a.m. we commemorate not just the end of WW-1 but the memory of those who died.



### **Yom Huledet Sameach**

Marcy Braun

### **Kol HaKavod**

Aaron Weinger spoke this week at the opening plenary of the General Assembly 2011 of The Jewish Federations of North America . Here is the speech he delivered:

My sister Sara was diagnosed with a brain tumor fifteen years ago, almost to the day. A five-year-old who defiantly wore her Yankees baseball cap as she lost her hair to chemotherapy, Sara helped me understand what it means to find hope in the face of a life-threatening illness. In the hospital, she received pastoral care from a chaplain on the pediatric unit. I knew then, and came to know more deeply in college, I would devote my life's work to provide healing in different areas of the rabbinate by drawing on the cadences of Jewish wisdom.

When I applied to rabbinical school at the Jewish Theological Seminary, I spoke with Sara's chaplain who now serves as the director of its Center for Pastoral Education. She became my advisor at JTS and, this past summer, I served as a chaplain intern under her supervision. I was matched with the Educational Alliance, an agency of UJA-Federation of New York. The traditional blessing which praises the One who gives strength to the weary, infused new meaning to my rabbinic calling as I gathered isolated older adults with mental illness every Monday morning. We met in a Lower East Side soup kitchen for *Bible Ba'Bokef*, our morning Torah study group. Though many of these older adults could not find a home on the streets of New York, each found a home within the seventy faces of Torah. As our Torah study group journeyed with the Israelites toward the Promised Land, I felt God's presence as the force for healing in the painful journeys of my clients.

My work with the Educational Alliance reminds me how our tradition, our Torah, makes those who feel invisible more visible in its light. For our tradition is expansive. Its contours are able to hold anger, joy, and glimpses of liberation as the desert sands shift under our feet in the shadow of Sinai. It is a tree of life I first grasped during Sara's illness, and I continue to draw from my experience to help others access the depth of their own. Through its vision and financial support of my placement at the Educational Alliance, UJA-Federation of New York enabled me to share the shade of that tree with older adults.

I spoke to my sister over the weekend. Like many college students at this time of year, Sara is busy studying for midterms and looking forward to Thanksgiving break, but she took a phone call from her older brother. It is hard to believe fifteen years have passed. As I prepare to graduate from rabbinical school in May, I feel thankful to continue learning from my sister and bringing healing to a fractured world.

### **Quote of the Week**

#### **A PRAYER FOR OUR SOLDIERS by Rabbi Jerome M. Epstein**

God of love. God of peace, Min Ha'Meitzar Karati Yah. Out of the depths of despair, we call to You. Our ears ring with the words "Do not fear." But our stomachs churn with the acid of doubt. Determined to preserve our shared world from the tyranny of terrorism, we turn to You for answers, for values, for strength.

We stand before You with respect and concern for those who have been summoned to protect and secure our nation, our world. Give them the courage to meet the chilling stare of death. Show compassion to them as they seek to make the world safer for us and for those we love.

Ease the pain of their loneliness as they face the darkness of their daunting task. Let them feel Your presence as You warm the chill of their souls with the blanket of Your light. Help those far from the comfort of home to find value and meaning in their mission; that their sacrifice not be an empty act.

Let them sense the yearning of those who await their return and long for their presence--their loved ones, their parents, their children. Protect them when they find themselves in harm's way. Salve their wounds with Your healing balm.

Melech chafetz Ba'chayyim, Sovereign Who desires life, above all protect them with Your merciful care. Return them safely to fulfill dreams unrealized so that they may bless Your name through the lives they live.

May their efforts further the cause of peace throughout the world and bring us closer to the day when  
"Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn of war anymore."

AMEN

Shabbat Shalom.

Stacy