



The Jewish Center at Your Shabbat Table



JANUARY 16, 2021 • 3 SHEVET 5781 • PARSHAT VAERA

SHABBAT SCHEDULE	ANNOUNCEMENTS	
<p>Erev Shabbat 4:10PM Virtual Kabbalat Shabbat 4:35PM Candle lighting 4:40PM Minchah at the JC</p> <p>Shabbat 9:30AM Shacharit at the JC 9:41AM Sof Zman Kriat Shema 9:45AM YL 4:35PM Minchah at the JC 5:36M Shabbat Concludes 6:05PM Virtual Havdallah</p> <p>*Please note registration and approval are required to join us in person.</p> <hr/> <p>A special thank you to our Covid-19 Task Force. Check out our COVID-19 Vaccine Resource Page on the Jewish Center website. Please email batsheva@jewishcenter.org if you need assistance.</p>	<p>THANK YOU TO OUR GRAB-N-GO KIDDUSH SPONSORS Gilda & Irving Chodosh in commemoration of the yahrzeits of Irving's parents, Benjamin and Jean Chodosh.</p>	
	UPCOMING EVENTS	
	<p>Book Launch: <i>The Crown and the Courts, Separation of Powers in the Early Jewish Imagination</i> with David Flatto Thursday, January 14th 8:00PM-9:00PM</p> <p>YoVAL: Teaching Race and Racism at Jewish Day Schools Sunday, January 17th at 8:00PM</p> <p>Sunday Brunch with Adeena Sussman Sunday, Jan 24th at 11:00AM Join Adeena Sussman for Cooking and Cocktails.</p> <p>Tu B'Shvat Seder Wednesday, Jan. 27th 7:00PM</p>	<p>Youth Dept. Paint Night with Rena Schiowitz Maryles Sunday, Jan 31st at 4:00PM</p> <p>YoVAL - What Does Slavery Have to Do With Me? Reckoning with Race and History with Rachel Swarns Monday, Feb 1st 7:30PM</p> <p>Position Your Child For College Wednesday, Feb 3rd at 7:30PM</p> <p>Purim Themed Paint Night with Rena Schiowitz Maryles Motzei Shabbat, Feb. 6th at 7:30PM</p>
<p>Register for all upcoming events at jewishcenter.org.</p>		

WEEKLY JCU CLASSES			 PARSHA QUESTIONS Why do you think Jewish history had to start at such a low point? Judaism believes that God acts in history (as seen so clearly in the Exodus story). What are the alternative ways to look at God and history? Why is this idea more clearly seen here in the Book of Exodus rather than the Book of Genesis and the stories that have preceded this one? Email your answers to Batsheva@jewishcenter.org
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	
<p>Sefer Yeshayahu at 7:30PM Rotating Clergy Register at jewishcenter.org Zoom ID: 857 2521 0914 Passcode: 177901 or dial in 1 929 205 6099</p>	<p>Women's Tehillim 7:00 PM Zoom ID: 873 5724 2653 Passcode: 108790 or dial in 1 929 205 6099</p> <p>The Amidah: A Closer Look with Rabbi Elie Buechler at 8:00PM Zoom ID: 899 2636 0944 Passcode: 099919 or dial in 929 205 6099</p>	<p>Advanced Talmud with Rabbi Yoni Rabinovitch, JC William Fischman Rabbinic Intern at 8:00AM Zoom ID: 861 0426 3443 Passcode: 233482 or dial in 16465588656</p> <p>Nosh & Drash with Dr. Adena Berkowitz at 10:45AM Zoom ID: 977-249-092 passcode: 627939</p> <p>The Commentaries The Sadye and Henry Bayer Chumash Class with Rabbi Yosie Levine at 8:00PM This survey course will focus on great Bible commentaries. Each week will feature a biographical sketch of the author followed by direct engagement with the commentaries themselves. Zoom ID: 814 2292 0271 Passcode: 361410 or dial in 929 205 6099</p>	
<p>Wednesday Women of the Bible with Rabbi Yosie Levine at 11:00AM Zoom ID: 423 116 421 Passcode: 167246 or dial in 1 929 205 6099</p> <p>Womens Talmud with Ora Weinbach at 8:00PM Zoom ID: 124 957 337 Passcode: 086834 or dial in 1 929 205 6099</p>	<p>Daily Daf Yomi: Maggidei Shiur Sunday-Friday at 7:45AM Meeting ID: 986 231 121 87# Password: 98410 Or dial in: 929-205-6099</p> <p>Five Minutes of Rambam with Rabbi Levine at 8:30AM Zoom ID: 896 5966 6245 Passcode: 578189 or dial in 1 646 558 8656</p>		

Enslaving Ourselves Rabbi Elie Buechler

'Let My people go' is the constant refrain in this week's parsha that Pharaoh refuses to heed. But even before Pharaoh has his first opportunity in the parsha to reject God's call, it is none other than Moshe himself who rejects God's command to direct this message to the king of Egypt. Moshe said, "Behold, the Children of Israel have not listened to me, so how will Pharaoh listen to me? And I have sealed lips." (Shemot 6:12). In reading this narrative, I always assumed that Moshe feared that if his own brethren would not respect him or heed his voice as the messenger of God, so certainly his words will be ignored by the most powerful ruler on earth.

The Meshech Chochmah boldly comments that my understanding of this conversation between Moshe and God is missing a major point. What is holding Moshe back from relaying God's message to Pharaoh to free the Jews? The shocking answer provided is that Pharaoh was not the only one with Jewish slaves. Jews were also enslaving other Jews in Egypt. "The children of Israel have not listened to me" and freed their own Jewish slaves, "so how will Pharaoh listen to me?" and free his own Jewish slaves as well? This is how the Meshech Chochmah reads our verse. It is a powerful analysis of our servitude in Egypt, that we too were slaveholders and enslaved our fellow Jews.

The Midrash (ParshatNaso 13:8) depicts the enslavement of Jews by other Jews as a struggle between competing tribes. It began with the tribe of Reuven, the firstborn of Israel, who enslaved his brethren. After the death of Reuven, the second tribe, Shimon, became the ruling class. And finally by the time of the Exodus, the third son, Levi became the chief among the tribes. This is precisely why the Torah tells us that the Levites

were not enslaved in Egypt - they were the slave owners. And due to these three tribes' mistreatment of their fellow Jews, they were destined to not have their own plot of land in Canaan. Reuven settles in Transjordan, Shimon gets swallowed up in the inheritance of Yehudah and ceases to exist as an independent entity, and Levi lives scattered among the tribes without their own land.

But their failures did not start in Shemot. Reuven, the firstborn and natural heir to Yaakov acts inappropriately with his father's concubine and does not succeed in stopping the sale of Yosef, and Shimon and Levi kill the inhabitants of Shechem. These tribes failed their tests of leadership in Sefer Bereishit and repeated these failures in Shemot and onward. The offspring of Reuven join the rebellion of Korach from the tribe of Levi, and the children of Shimon are instrumental in the sins with the Midianites.

And this also explains the odd interjection in the Torah of the bloodlines of Reuven, Shimon and Levi in the second aliyah of our parsha. The Torah is explaining to us who the ruling class in Egypt were, and who also bear responsibility for our bondage in Egypt. While this may paint a picture of doom and gloom, the passage ends with the births of Moshe and Aharon of the tribe of Levi. From the very same tribe who ruled over other Jews, would emerge the models of leadership and redemption for all of Israel. We may have disgraced ourselves to the lowest level of impurity in the land of Egypt, but the everlasting message is that leaders of good faith and moral conviction can always find their way despite the perilous environment encompassing them.

ISRAEL UPDATE

January 15, 2021

Israel Vaccinates 20% of its Population, World's Fastest Vaccine Rollout

As of January 11, three weeks after its initial COVID-19 vaccine rollout, Israel has distributed the vaccine to over 20% of its population. With the highest per capita vaccination rate in the world, Israel's rapid deployment strategy has been embraced by some countries, with reports indicating that Britain has completely remodeled its own vaccine rollout based on Israel's methods. Israel is a world leader in medical innovation and a key partner in fighting COVID-19, and greater U.S.-Israel cooperation with Israel's robust ecosystem of healthcare companies can help provide critical health solutions to Americans in need. In 2020, as part of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), Congress authorized \$12 million over the next three years for an initiative to enhance partnerships between U.S. and Israeli companies to develop innovative medical projects aimed at detecting, treating and curing COVID-19. Our synagogue partners with AIPAC, America's pro-Israel lobby, in educating our community on issues affecting the U.S.-Israel relationship. We encourage you to learn more by contacting AIPAC at (202) 639-5200 or by visiting www.aipac.org.

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