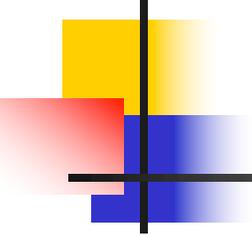


Gleanings from The High Holy Day Texts

Torah and Haftarah Readings

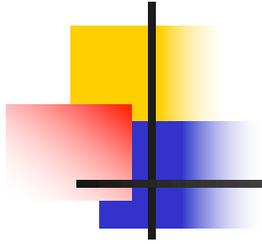
Rosh Hashanah First Day

Led by Nancy Pryzant Picus



Rosh Hashanah Themes

- Names
 - Rosh Hashanah—The Beginning of the Year
 - Yom T'ruah—Day of the Shofar's Call
 - Yom Hadin—Judgment Day
 - Yom Harat Ha'Olam—The "Birthday" of the World
 - Yom Hazikaron—The Day of Remembrance
- Themes
 - Malchuyot—God's Sovereignty
 - Zichronot, Yizkor, Eleh Ezk'rah—Remembrances
 - Shofarot

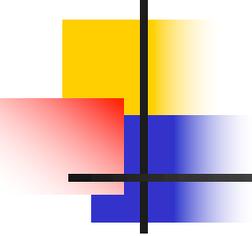


Torah Readings

Maftir: Numbers 29:1-6

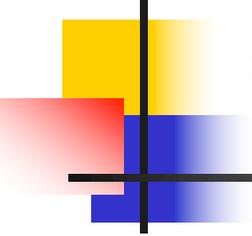
Traditional: Genesis 21:1-34

Alternate: Genesis 1:1-2:3



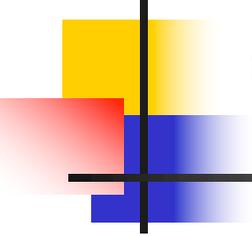
Maftir: Numbers 29:1-6

1. In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations. You shall observe it as a day when the horn is sounded.
2. You shall present a burnt offering of pleasing odor to the LORD: one bull of the herd, one ram, and seven yearling lambs, without blemish.
3. The meal offering with them—choice flour with oil mixed in—shall be: three-tenths of a measure for a bull, two-tenths for a ram,
4. and one-tenth for each of the seven lambs.
5. And there shall be one goat for a sin offering, to make expiation in your behalf—
6. in addition to the burnt offering of the new moon with its meal offering and the regular burnt offering with its meal offering, each with its libation as prescribed, offerings by fire of pleasing odor to the LORD.



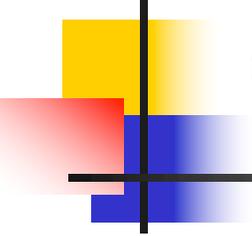
Genesis 21:1-5

1. The LORD took note of Sarah as He had promised, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had spoken.
2. Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken.
3. Abraham gave his newborn son, whom Sarah had borne him, the name of Isaac.
4. And when his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God had commanded him.
5. Now Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.



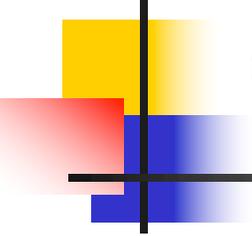
Genesis 21:6-8

6. Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter; everyone who hears will laugh with me."
7. And she added, "Who would have said to Abraham That Sarah would suckle children! Yet I have borne a son in his old age."
8. The child grew up and was weaned, and Abraham held a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.



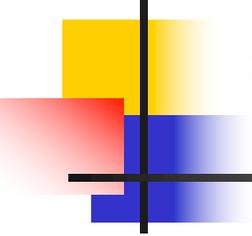
Genesis 21:9-11

9. Sarah saw the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham playing.
10. She said to Abraham, "Cast out that slave-woman and her son, for the son of that slave shall not share in the inheritance with my son Isaac."
11. The matter distressed Abraham greatly, for it concerned a son of his.



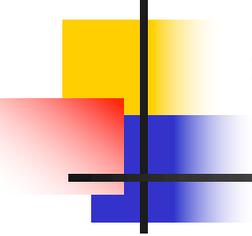
Genesis 21:12-13

12. But God said to Abraham, "Do not be distressed over the boy or your slave; whatever Sarah tells you, do as she says, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be continued for you.
13. As for the son of the slave-woman, I will make a nation of him, too, for he is your seed."



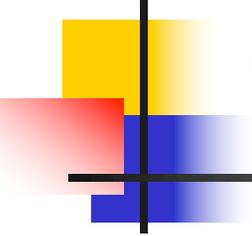
Genesis 21:14-16

14. Early next morning Abraham took some bread and a skin of water, and gave them to Hagar. He placed them over her shoulder, together with the child, and sent her away. And she wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.
15. When the water was gone from the skin, she left the child under one of the bushes,
16. and went and sat down at a distance, a bowshot away; for she thought, "Let me not look on as the child dies." And sitting thus afar, she burst into tears.



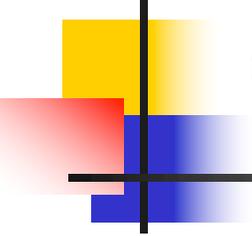
Genesis 21:17-19

17. God heard the cry of the boy, and an angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heeded the cry of the boy where he is.
18. Come, lift up the boy and hold him by the hand, for I will make a great nation of him."
19. Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. She went and filled the skin with water, and let the boy drink.



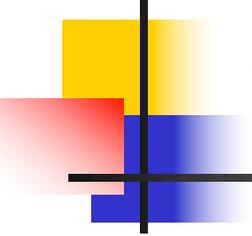
Genesis 21:20-21

20. God was with the boy and he grew up; he dwelt in the wilderness and became a bowman.
21. He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt.



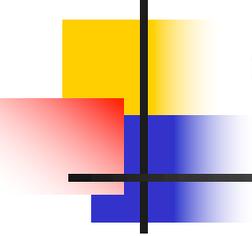
Genesis 21:22-24

22. At that time Abimelech and Phicol, chief of his troops, said to Abraham, "God is with you in everything that you do.
23. Therefore swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me or with my kith and kin, but will deal with me and with the land in which you have sojourned as loyally as I have dealt with you."
24. And Abraham said, "I swear it."



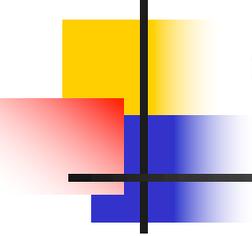
Genesis 21:25-27

25. Then Abraham reproached Abimelech for the well of water which the servants of Abimelech had seized.
26. But Abimelech said, "I do not know who did this; you did not tell me, nor have I heard of it until today."
27. Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two of them made a pact.



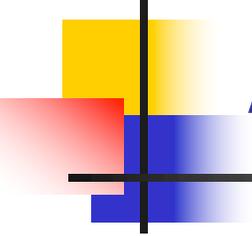
Genesis 21:28-31

28. Abraham then set seven ewes of the flock by themselves,
29. and Abimelech said to Abraham, "What mean these seven ewes which you have set apart?"
30. He replied, "You are to accept these seven ewes from me as proof that I dug this well."
31. Hence that place was called Beer-sheba, for there the two of them swore an oath.



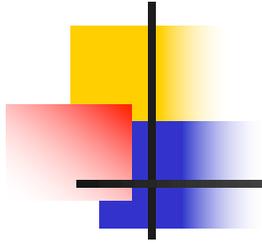
Genesis 21:32-34

32. When they had concluded the pact at Beer-sheba, Abimelech and Phicol, chief of his troops, departed and returned to the land of the Philistines.
33. [Abraham] planted a tamarisk at Beer-sheba, and invoked there the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God.
34. And Abraham resided in the land of the Philistines a long time.



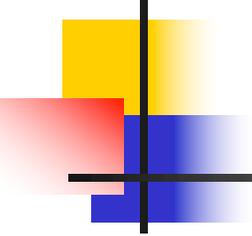
Alternative Readings

- Reform Movement, Genesis 1:1-2:3



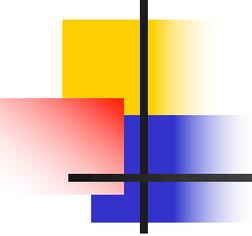
Haftarah

1 Samuel 1:1-2:10



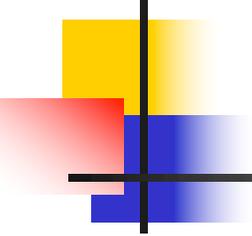
Haftarah: 1 Samuel 1:1-6

1. There was a man from Ramathaim of the Zuphites, in the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham son of Elihu son of Tohu son of Zuph, an Ephraimite.
2. He had two wives, one named Hannah and the other Peninnah; Peninnah had children, but Hannah was childless.
3. This man used to go up from his town every year to worship and to offer sacrifice to the LORD of Hosts at Shiloh.—Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the LORD there.
4. One such day, Elkanah offered a sacrifice. He used to give portions to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters;
5. but to Hannah he would give one portion only—though Hannah was his favorite—for the LORD had closed her womb.
6. Moreover, her rival, to make her miserable, would taunt her that the LORD had closed her womb.



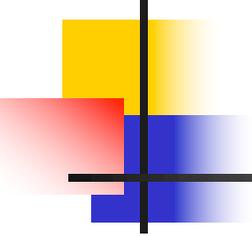
Haftarah: 1 Samuel 1:6-10

7. This happened year after year: Every time she went up to the House of the LORD, the other would taunt her, so that she wept and would not eat.
8. Her husband Elkanah said to her, "Hannah, why are you crying and why aren't you eating? Why are you so sad? Am I not more devoted to you than ten sons?"
9. After they had eaten and drunk at Shiloh, Hannah rose.—The priest Eli was sitting on the seat near the doorpost of the temple of the LORD.—
10. In her wretchedness, she prayed to the LORD, weeping all the while.



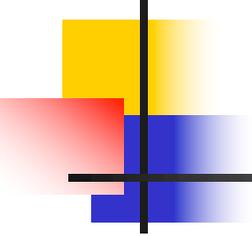
Haftarah: 1 Samuel 1:11-14

11. And she made this vow: "O LORD of Hosts, if You will look upon the suffering of Your maidservant and will remember me and not forget Your maidservant, and if You will grant Your maidservant a male child, I will dedicate him to the LORD for all the days of his life; and no razor shall ever touch his head."
12. As she kept on praying before the LORD, Eli watched her mouth.
13. Now Hannah was praying in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice could not be heard. So Eli thought she was drunk.
14. Eli said to her, "How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Sober up!"



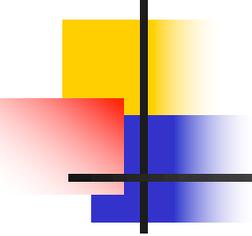
Haftarah: 1 Samuel 1:15-18

15. And Hannah replied, "Oh no, my lord! I am a very unhappy woman. I have drunk no wine or other strong drink, but I have been pouring out my heart to the LORD.
16. Do not take your maidservant for a worthless woman; I have only been speaking all this time out of my great anguish and distress."
17. "Then go in peace," said Eli, "and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of Him."
18. She answered, "You are most kind to your handmaid." So the woman left, and she ate, and was no longer downcast.



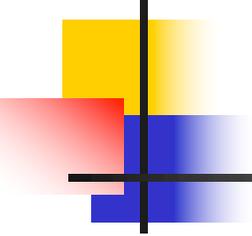
Haftarah: 1 Samuel 1:19-22

19. Early next morning they bowed low before the LORD, and they went back home to Ramah. Elkanah knew his wife Hannah and the LORD remembered her.
20. Hannah conceived, and at the turn of the year bore a son. She named him Samuel, meaning, "I asked the LORD for him."
21. And when the man Elkanah and all his household were going up to offer to the LORD the annual sacrifice and his votive sacrifice,
22. Hannah did not go up. She said to her husband, "When the child is weaned, I will bring him. For when he has appeared before the LORD, he must remain there for good."



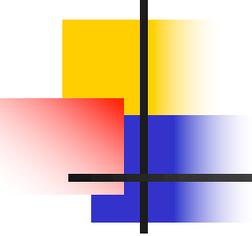
Haftarah: 1 Samuel 1:22-28

22. Her husband Elkanah said to her, "Do as you think best. Stay home until you have weaned him. May the LORD fulfill His word." So the woman stayed home and nursed her son until she weaned him.
23. When she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with three bulls, one ephah of flour, and a jar of wine. And though the boy was still very young, she brought him to the House of the LORD at Shiloh.
24. After slaughtering the bull, they brought the boy to Eli.
25. She said, "Please, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you and prayed to the LORD.
26. It was this boy I prayed for; and the LORD has granted me what I asked of Him.
27. I, in turn, hereby lend him to the LORD. For as long as he lives he is lent to the LORD." And they bowed low there before the LORD.



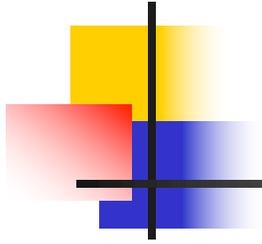
Haftarah: 1 Samuel 2:1-5

1. And Hannah prayed: My heart exults in the LORD; I have triumphed through the LORD. I gloat over my enemies; I rejoice in Your deliverance.
2. There is no holy one like the LORD, truly, there is none beside You; there is no rock like our God.
3. Talk no more with lofty pride, let no arrogance cross your lips! For the LORD is an all-knowing God; by Him actions are measured.
4. The bows of the mighty are broken, and the faltering are girded with strength.
5. Men once sated must hire out for bread; men once hungry hunger no more. While the barren woman bears seven, the mother of many is forlorn.



Haftarah: 1 Samuel 2:6-10

6. The LORD deals death and gives life, casts down into Sheol and raises up.
7. The LORD makes poor and makes rich; He casts down, He also lifts high.
8. He raises the poor from the dust, lifts up the needy from the dunghill, setting them with nobles, granting them seats of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's; He has set the world upon them.
9. He guards the steps of His faithful, but the wicked perish in darkness—
For not by strength shall man prevail.
10. The foes of the LORD shall be shattered; He will thunder against them in the heavens. The LORD will judge the ends of the earth. He will give power to His king, and triumph to His anointed one.



Additional Readings

Machzor Lev Shalem

P. 100

Although Rosh Hashanah commemorates the anniversary of the creation of the world, the Rabbis did not select the opening passage of Genesis as a reading for the first day; instead, they chose the story of the birth of Isaac, focusing on a particular human story rather than the creation of the whole world.

The Rabbis may have wanted to stress the continuity of the Jewish people: the birth of a second Jewish generation after the founding generation of Abraham and Sarah.

The Torah does not present us with an idealized heroic family but rather, offers us a domestic scene with clashing personalities and motives that can be variously interpreted as selfless or selfish. This ambiguity allows us to consider the complexity of our own motivations and how difficult it is to understand ourselves and others. In any given year, we may identify with Abraham or Sarah or Hagar or the children, Ishmael and Isaac; as we change, so may our sympathies with the different characters.

Mishkan Hanefesh: Machzor for the Days of Awe

P. 248

Hayom harat olam (Today the world is born anew). These words, recited after the shofar is sounded, underscore a central theme of Rosh Hashanah: creation, and the renewal of all life. The traditional Torah reading for the first day of Rosh Hashanah accentuates this message; Genesis 21 tells of the end of Sarah's barrenness and the birth of Isaac. So, too, the haftarah chosen by our Sages for the first day of Rosh Hashanah recounts the story of a barren woman whose prayers are answered by the birth of a child. Hannah, a woman of deep piety and spiritual grace (her name means "grace"), presents a model of heartfelt prayer and integrity that contrasts sharply with the behavior of Eli, the High Priest. Hannah cries out to God in "bitterness of spirit" (*marat nefesh*) and she is given life. Like her we come together on Rosh Hashanah to seek renewed life and hope, to pray that we might transcend our pain and transform our lives.

Machzor Lev Shalem

P. 108

The Haftarah readings taken from the prophetic books of the Bible often complement the Torah reading by adding a different layer of understanding. Like the Torah reading, this Haftarah features a couple struggling with infertility, as well as a fertile “other” woman who disdains the barren wife. Characteristically in the Bible, infertility is a sign of the chosenness of both the woman and the child to be born to her. It is also emblematic of the way in which life’s most difficult and painful challenges, particularly in areas which seem to come easily to others, may also be moments of deepening one’s relationship with God. Additionally, Hannah’s giving up of Samuel to the work of God anticipates, albeit in a milder fashion, Abraham’s giving up of Isaac...But the motives and behaviors of the characters are quite different. Sarah sends Ishmael away in order to keep Isaac close, while Hannah willingly gives up her own child. Isaac is bound as a sacrifice and lives life in his father’s shadow, whereas Samuel will be an active prophet, crowning and dethroning.