

Times of Services

If you don't already do so, come to at least one Shacharit and one Minchah each week – you'll love it!

Shabbat 5/9-5/10/08:

Next Shabbat Dinner June 6th

Candle Lighting 7:40 PM

Friday Mincha and Maariv 7:00 PM

Shabbat Shacharit 9:30 am

followed by Kiddush Mincha,

Seuda Shlishit followed by Marriv:
7:30 PM

Shabbat ends 8:46 PM

Sunday 5/11/08:

- Shacharit 8:30 AM
- Minchah 7:50 PM
- Bible project 7:00 PM
- The Mystery of Destiny—The book of Job—8:10 PM

Monday 5/12/08

- Shacharit. 6:30 AM
- Minchah/Maariv 7:50 PM

Tuesday 5/14/08–Thurs 5/15/08

- Shacharit. 6:45 AM
- Torah Class 8:10—9 @ JCC-Tuesdays
- Minchah/Maariv 7:50 PM

This month the joint Agudas -Young Israel Mincha/Maariv service will be held at Young Israel of West Hartford

Co-sponsoring Lunch with the Zach's family: Rick Sirvint and Roberta Gordenstein in memory of Rick's father's Yahrzeit and in honor of Rick's retirement from the public school system.

Sponsor A Kiddush!

***A SCHEDULE OF DATES IS NOW AVAILABLE FOR KIDDUSHIM
CELEBRATE A SIMCHA — BIRTHDAY,
ANNIVERSARY, BAR/BAT-MITZVAH,
GRADUATION, ETC.***

Starting at

Costs vary from \$ 105 - \$175

Co-sponsor \$55

For more details, please contact the shul

**Please sponsor a Seuda Shlishit
(third meal on shabbat), cost is \$20.
Contact Bob Birnbaum 236-4914
for more information**

Congregation Agudas Achim
1244 N. Main St.
West Hartford, CT 06117

Weekly Calendar
5/10/08-5/15/2008

Agudas Achim
Weekly News



Parshat Emor

**In the Hertz
Chumash on pg 513**

Phone: (860) 233-6241

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Grain, Growth and Goodness

In this weeks Torah portion, Parshat Emor, we read the Torah's instruction that on the second day of Passover we should bring a measure –an “*Omer*” –of the first cutting of our barley harvest to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem as an offering to G-d, and not to partake of that year's barley crop –or any other newly harvested grain, until that offering is made. We are then to count 49 days from that offering, and on the 50th day, which is Shavuot, we are commanded to bring the first of our wheat harvest as an offering to G-d, and not partake of that year's wheat until this is done.

Hence, the 49-day count leading from Passover to Shavuot is called “The Counting of the Omer” –a reference to the *omer* (a biblical measure) of barley that was brought on the first day of the count –and Shavuot is called *Yom Habikkurim*, “The Day of the First-Fruits Offering.”

As always in the Torah, there are eternal personal and societal insights to be gleaned from particular public ritual.

In Biblical tradition, barley is primarily animal food. Wheat is the key and ideal human food.

The understanding that we gain from these offerings is:

The Hebrew word for offering, “Korban” means “to draw near”. This 49 day period of the Sefirat Ha'omer, the arc between these two offerings of wheat and barley, is an opportune time for spiritual and ethical self development. It represents the opportunity to draw close to G-dliness, the entire universe of human impulse, from the most basic drives for self preservation to them most subtle intellectual and artistic insight.

In each one of us there is a human “G-dly soul” and an “animal soul.” The Animal Soul of the human being is uniquely human and contains a broad range of emotional and intellectual characteristics. Regarding the emotional aspects of the Animal Soul, most of us would agree that a “barley offering” is in order. Obviously, the appetites for physical pleasure and expression of ego must be controlled and tamed by connecting them to the Divine. We must therefore offer up my physical drives and desires to control by G-d through the mediation of our G-dly soul lest they get the better of us. We see every day around us the harm caused to individuals and those around them, as well as to whole societies, by the untrammelled expression of the Animal Soul

However when it comes to the intellectual and creative side of the Animal Soul, we are inclined to believe that all intellectual and artistic endeavor is inherently positive, inasmuch as it is uniquely human and intrinsically refined. There are those who would argue that untrammelled intellectual and artistic expression is itself a fundamental good.

Torah rejects these premises and tells us “Stop”! Before we can use “wheat” - the uniquely human aspects of our natural soul, we must also, first, bring an offering of our “wheat” –our human endeavor--to G-d. We can engage in thorough introspection and mediation, seeking the input of our G-dly soul into each intellectual and aesthetic journey we embark upon. If we do not bind our intellect and creativity to the unchanging and transcendent G-dly values articulated in the Torah and fed into our consciousness by the G-dly soul then - no matter how profound our

musings or how refined our aesthetic, we risk creating and inspiring falsehood, evil and destruction. Not all art inspires positive behavior or attitudes; not every music uplifts the soul; nor is every philosophy helpful or even benign.

Indeed, there is nothing more destructive than negative concepts and beliefs and societal paradigms. All the worst evils of a terribly violent and inhumane 20th century stemmed not from misused “Barley” - greed and base animal passions, but from misused “Wheat” - malignant ideologies. Archimedes of Syracuse famously said “Give me a place to stand upon, and with a lever I will move the whole world.” That place exists; it is the human mind. The ideas in those minds lift the world up or cast it down. Only by shining the light of G-dliness into our souls can we distinguish between the ideas and creations that refine humanity and those that pollute it.

We can begin each step of every intellectual, creative, societal or political endeavor by asking: “Does this essay or poem or work of art or piece of music or speech or campaign to mold public opinion, move us closer to unity by expressing a G-dly vision of a harmonious, uplifted, and refined world?”

If we do, it will.

Shabbat Shalom

Announcements

Zachs Memorial Lecture

Featuring: ELEONORA SHIFRIN

Shabbat May 10th and 11th Lecture times including:

* **Saturday Lunch** May 10th after services (at approx. 12:30 p.m.)

Title of lunch lecture: Israel: Can it be Jewish and Democratic? Israeli democracy and its effect on the future of Jewish people in the Land of Israel and in the Diaspora

\$12 per adult and \$6 per child

* **Sunday Breakfast** May 11th at 10:00 a.m.

Title of breakfast lecture: What can YOU (in the Diaspora) do (if anything) to help Israel survive?

\$5 per person

call 233 6241 to RSVP by May 8th!!



Smile of the week

Noah in 2008.

In the year 2008, the Lord came unto Noah, who was now living in the United States, and said, “Once again, the earth has become wicked and over-populated, and I see the end of all flesh before me.

“Build another Ark and save 2 of every living thing along with a few good humans.”

He gave Noah the blueprints, saying, “You have 6 months to build the Ark before will start the unending rain for 40 days and 40 nights.” Six months later, the Lord looked down and saw Noah weeping in his yard - but I Ark.

“Noah!” He roared, “I’m about to start the rain! Where is the Ark?”

“Forgive me, Lord,” begged Noah, “but things have changed. I needed a building permit. I’ve been arguing with the inspector about the need for a sprinkler system. My neighbors claim that I’ve violated the neighborhood zoning laws by building the Ark in my yard and exceeding the height limitations. We had to go to the Development Appeal Board for a decision.

“Then the Department of Transportation demanded a bond be posted for the future costs of moving power lines and other overhead obstructions, to clear the passage for the Ark’s move to the sea. I told them that the sea would be coming to us, but they would hear nothing of it.

“Getting the wood was another problem. There’s a ban on cutting local trees in order to save the spotted owl. I tried to convince the environmentalists that I needed the wood to save the owls - but no go!

“When I started gathering the animals, an animal rights group sued me.

“They insisted that I was confining wild animals against their will. They argued that accommodations were too restrictive, and it was cruel and inhumane to put so many animals in a confined space.

“Then the EPA ruled that I couldn’t build the Ark until they’d conducted an environmental impact study on your proposed flood.

“I’m still trying to resolve a complaint with the Human Rights Commission on how many minorities I’m supposed to hire for my building crew.

“Immigration and Naturalization are checking the green-card status of most of the people who want to work.

“The trades unions say I can’t use my sons. They insist I have to hire only Union workers with Ark-building experience.

“To make matters worse, the IRS seized all my assets, claiming I’m trying to leave the country illegally with endangered species.

“So, forgive me, Lord, but it would take at least 10 years for me to finish this Ark. Suddenly the skies cleared, the sun began to shine, and a rainbow stretched across the sky.

Noah looked up in wonder and asked, “You mean you’re not going to destroy the world?”

“No,” said the Lord. “The government beat me to it.”

Ethel K

If you would like to submit a “smile of the week” please email Renana Kadden at kaddenr@comcast.net