

PRAYER

Have many among us brought to God our most treasured possessions, the first fruits of our labor?

Having brought them to God, have we acknowledged that we were once wanderers and slaves, and that only through His help have we come to a good land?

Having acknowledged that He brought us to this estate, do we remember that His constant care is like the rain that falls and the grain that grows?

Have we understood that the strength of God is His mercy, that His mighty hand is outstretched to us only when we reach toward Him?

We pray to learn anew these lessons of our teacher, Moses: to bring to God the offering of first fruits,

To acknowledge in humility our dependence upon Him, to share our joy with the lonely and the depressed, with the stranger as well as the friend,

To rejoice in all the good which God has given us, to come gladly to the house of God

To give thanks for the wonders of His universe that sustain us every moment of our lives.

Ruth Brin

THOUGHT FOR THE MOMENT OF SILENCE

Learn from the mistakes of others.
You can't make them all yourself.

Unknown



September 17, 2011

יז אלול תשע"א

Parashat Ki Tavo - Deuteronomy 26:1-29:8 (כי תבוא)

Hertz – p 859

Stone – p 1068

Haftarah – Isaiah 60:1-22 (ישעיהו)

Hertz – p 874

Stone – p 1201

We celebrate the *Bar Mitzvah* of
Leo Holden,
son of David & Liz Holden

Kiddush Luncheon sponsored by
David & Liz Holden
in honor of Leo's *Bar Mitzvah*

Rabbi Gordon's Talmud Class – 4:45 PM

Minchah – 6:00 PM

Shabbat Ends – 7:50 PM

On This Week's Torah Portion - כי תבוא

HaShem will attach the plague to you until it consumes you... HaShem will strike you with swelling lesions, with fever, with burning heat, with thirst ... HaShem will strike you with the boils of Egypt ... of which you cannot be cured. HaShem will strike you with madness and with blindness, and with confounding of the heart. You will grope at noontime as a blind man gropes in the darkness, but you will not succeed on your way... Your sons and daughters will be given to another people – and your eyes will see and pine in vain for them all day long, but your hand will be powerless. (28:21-32)

We associate these words from the *Tochachah* / admonition, with some of the most terrible times in Jewish history – the destruction of the two Temples and the resulting exiles, the Spanish Inquisition, the Holocaust. I would like to suggest that even in our gilded ghettos of North America, we are suffering from some of these plagues right now.

My Hebrew name is Rafael, from the root "to heal," so I make a point in my daily prayers of adding prayers for the sick. It struck me the other day just how many of the people on my *refuah* list have either auto-immune diseases or environmentally-generated diseases, none of which are amenable to Western medical interventions. One has Multiple Sclerosis; her brother has esophageal cancer from a lifetime of cigarette smoking. He is currently receiving radiation and chemotherapy, all of which is making him sicker than the cancer. My cousin's husband has Parkinsonism; perhaps had we aggressively promoted research on stem-cell therapies there'd be better news for him, but politics trumped human suffering. My son has Crohn's disease, which is also an auto-immune condition. He is taking a drug the long-term effects of which appear to be to increase one's susceptibility to leukemia. I have psoriasis, another auto-immune disease; the allopathic treatments I have tried have only made it worse. Oy – in just one family! What is going on!

There are additional plagues in the natural environment that appear to be on the upswing. An earthquake and tsunami devastated Japan, made many times worse by the presence, and failure, of a major nuclear power plant. As I write this New Zealand is cleaning up after its second major earthquake of 2011. The central US has had its worst year for tornado deaths and for flooding in decades; the floods in Manitoba this year will apparently exceed the "flood of the century" of 1997 in cost. The rain is washing out crops and driving food prices through the roof. I have been out of graduate school for too long to say with any certainty that this severe weather is directly related to global warming, and in any event there are those who would still argue that global warming is not anthropogenic. What is clear is that our actions vis-à-vis nature are inappropriate, and nature appears to be reacting.

Perhaps all this is a message from HaShem that we are taking the wrong approach to life. In some cases we can see where the problem lies. Tobacco causes cancer – why is it not a controlled substance? Alcohol makes people drunk and disorderly (or worse) – why is it not a controlled substance? The answer is obvious – there is too much money to be made, and those who are making the money are perfectly willing to let other people die rather than see their wealth diminish. In some cases the causes are less clear – is there an increase in auto-immune disorders in the population, or is the evidence purely anecdotal? Or is it a function of better reporting? Or is it a function of increased exposure to environmental toxins – the welter of antibiotics in our air and water from being fed to animals in large quantities, or heavy metals from our industries, or herbicides and pesticides and all the myriad other poisons we generate for ourselves? Or perhaps it's from our highly-processed food?

Once upon a time it seems that Gd had to punish us by bringing great armies over long distances to cause physical destruction. Nowadays it seems like all He has to do is stand back and let us punish ourselves! But the message is the same: we have put material considerations as our first priority, and human and spiritual considerations way down the list. Any kind of self-destructive behavior is condoned, as long as there is some short-term profit to be had.

A wise man once said "only a new seed will yield a new crop." My friend Marie commented, when the great financial crisis of 2008 broke, that the problem was not an economic problem, rather it was, and is, and has been from Biblical times, a spiritual crisis. It is a crisis of individuals and communities that are so absorbed in the material outer crust of creation that they have cut themselves off from the infinite, inner value that supports that outer crust. Once the support is lost, the collapse of the superstructure is inevitable. We need to start planting a new seed of spiritual awareness, in ourselves, in our children, in our communities. We need to take time out simply to *be* – to return to the spiritual wellsprings of our tradition, to pray with some intentionality and some intensity, to think long and hard about who we are and where we are going. The upcoming Days of Awe would be a very good time to start.

Shabbat shalom, Rafi Rabinoff

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday – Tuesday, September 18-20 2012 **Membership Directory Photo Sessions.** Go on-line to www.tradcong.org, click on the Lifetouch button, and select your appointment—times are still available for Monday & Tuesday! For questions or to help out, contact Elaine Farkas, 314-439-9747 or 954-558-1159. Photos will be taken in the Jewish Heritage Center, PLEASE ENTER FROM THE EXTERIOR JHC ENTRANCE NEAR THE WEST PARKING LOT.

Tuesday, Sept. 20 PJ Storytime at Brodsky Library, ages 3-9. Stories, puppets, treats. Kids can come in pj's. No charge, but please bring canned goods for Jewish Food Pantry. 6:45 PM. RSVP required, 314-442-3720.

Shabbat, Sept. 24 *Kiddush* luncheon co-sponsored by Stuart Kaufman in honor of the "10th" birthday of his wife, Judy, and by the family of Maurice Goffstein in honor of his birthday.

Motzei Shabbat, Sept. 24 **Selichot Program & Services.** Showing and discussion of the Coen Brothers' Oscar-nominated film, "A Serious Man," a comedy drama centered on Larry Gopnik, a Midwestern professor who watches his life unravel through multiple sudden incidents. Film & refreshments at 9:30 PM, followed by discussion, and then *Selichot* services.

Sunday, Sept. 25 **Volunteers needed to set up our Sanctuary for the High Holydays**, please help out at 10:00 AM.

Sunday, Sept. 25 Medical Equipment Donation Drive @B'nai Amoona, 9 AM-2 PM. Donations of new or used medical devices will be cleaned, refurbished and loaned to those in need at no cost.

Wed. Sept. 28 **Office Closed**

Thursday – Friday, September 29-30 **Rosh Hashanah.** See Newsletter for complete Schedule of Services.

There are two boxes of *tallitot* and *tallit* bags in the Coatroom that were removed from the shelves prior to the renovations; **if your personal item is there, please claim it.** All unclaimed items will be put into general usage or given away.

As Rosh Hashanah approaches, please consider a gift to the **Irv & Kay Diamant Meat Fund**; checks may be made payable "Barbara Mendelson Tomchei Shabbos Fund," note "DMF" in memo, mail to 4 Millstone Campus Drive, St Louis 63146.

Condolences to... Sherri Lopatin, on the passing of her mother, Helen Lopatin.
Mazal Tov to... Dick & Dianna Fine on the birth of a grandson, Alexander Jordan Fine.

DAILY SERVICE TIMES

Sunday morning – 9:00 AM

Monday - Friday morning – 7:00 AM

Monday - Friday evening – 6:30 PM