

mine during my years as a rabbi in Miami Beach fifty years ago. He was a Holocaust survivor, a man of material wealth and clever intellect. He once told me that he was a very wealthy man in Hungary before World War II. In the very late 1930s he visited the Land of Israel and on a whim purchased an apartment here in Jerusalem.

In late summer 1944, together with hundreds of thousands of other Hungarian Jews, he and his family were deported to Auschwitz. His family could not survive the ordeal, though somehow he did remain alive, and eventually he rebuilt his life and once again created a family and material success in America. He told me that every night in the barracks of the labor camp, to which he was assigned, lying on the wooden pallet that served as his bed, in his mind he furnished the apartment that he purchased in Jerusalem. In his mind, he bought the finest furniture and wall coverings and arranged them so that the apartment shone in splendor, good taste and elegance.

He said it was this imaginary scene of the better tomorrow that kept him alive and gave him the spiritual and mental fortitude not to give up completely and just pass away, as unfortunately so many others did. To survive the desert of Sinai the Jewish people had to imagine the lush fields of the Land of Israel and a sabbatical year that would bring blessing and prosperity upon those fields and their owners.

The Torah emphasizes to us that the sabbatical year was commanded to Israel in a forbidding and dark place because of the fact that it would give hope, optimism and vision for the great blessings of the Land of Israel that they would yet live to experience. *Rabbi Berel Wein and torah.org.*

Haftarah Summary Rabbi Aron Tendler

This week's Haftarah is among the

Minyan Schedule

Erev Shabbat Parashat Emor
Candle lighting 20/05/16 4.41 pm
Mincha (Mizrachi) pm

Shabbat Parashat Emor
Shacharit 21/05/16 9.15 am
Children's Service 10.00 am
Mincha (Mizrachi) 4.28 pm
Shabbat ends 5.38 pm

Erev Shabbat Parashat Behar
Candle lighting 19/05/16 4.38 pm
Mincha (Mizrachi) pm

Announcements

**Kiddush is sponsored by
The Synagogue**

**Mazal Tov to
Michelle and Rabbi Danny
Eisenberg and family on
the birth of a daughter and
sister**

**Mazal Tov to the
Eisenberg and Abeshouse
extended families**

**Please see your email for
details of upcoming events**

prophecies of Yechezkel describing the third Bais Hamikdash. Yechezkel's prophesized after the destruction of the first Bais Hamikdash in the year 3352-410 b.c.e. In the Haftarah, Yechezkel instructed the Kohanim in their unique laws. It relates to this week's Parsha which also details many of the laws imposed specifically on the Kohanim. *Rabbi Aron Tendler and torah.org.*

Or Chadash

קהילת אור חדש

WEEKLY BULLETIN

Shabbat Parashat Emor 13 Iyar 5776;
21 May, 2016

Shabbat Torah reading: Stone Chumash
page 672, Haftarah page 1176.

President Jonathan Erlich
Rabbi-in-residence Rabbi Eisenberg
Dvrei Torah

Holiness and Our Synagogues Rabbi Marc D. Angel

I recently received a communication from an individual who had been very active in his synagogue, but who has grown increasingly disillusioned. He feels that his congregation is controlled by a small clique of wealthy individuals who have little regard for the feelings of members of the congregation. He finds that the rabbi of his synagogue is not easily accessible and is not a particularly spiritual person (e.g. he often misses daily prayer services, he enjoys talking and telling jokes during services, he kisses up to his favored congregants etc.) While this congregant and others have voiced their concerns and criticisms, the "establishment" goes on its own course.

I have heard this same general complaint from individuals in various synagogues

in different cities and towns. Instead of serving as loving spiritual homes, some synagogues operate more like country clubs. They serve the interests of an elite clientele, but do not address the genuine spiritual, emotional and communal needs of their members. As a result, members gravitate in search of other synagogues; or they attend their synagogue less often and less enthusiastically.

The basic source of the problem is that sometimes rabbinic and lay leadership see the synagogue in almost secular terms. It is a sort of business or club where people can display control or power, where people seek honor for themselves. Its success is measured by how many dollars are raised or by how many members are on the membership roll. But synagogues are not secular institutions. They are religious institutions and need to live up to the highest religious values. They need to focus on their spiritual agenda.

A story is told of the great Hassidic master, Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of



Berdichev. He had been visiting a town and attended prayer services in the local synagogue. One day, he stopped at the synagogue door and did not enter the sanctuary. The many people who were accompanying him were perplexed. Why did the Rebbe not enter the synagogue? Rabbi Levi Yitzhak told them: "I am not entering the synagogue because it's too crowded." But the synagogue was empty! The Rebbe explained: "The synagogue is full of prayers, there's no room left for us. Usually, when we pray, our prayers ascend to the gate of heaven; however, in this synagogue, the prayers are recited without proper concentration and devotion, so the prayers don't reach heaven. In fact, they are trapped in the synagogue building—so there is no room left for us in the synagogue."

A synagogue is a holy place dedicated to the glory of G-d. If prayers are to ascend to heaven, the synagogue must reflect sanctity and humility. In some cases, though, synagogues fall short of the ideal. Instead of being dedicated to the glory of G-d, it sometimes happens that synagogues seem more dedicated to the glory of human beings. There are synagogues where the rabbis strive to be quasi-cult figures promoting their own glory, not G-d's. There are synagogues where the cantors or lay readers strive to show off their voices, promoting their own glory, not G-d's. There are synagogues where congregants engage in "shul politics" in order to gain power for themselves, seeking to aggrandize their own glory, not G-d's. Such synagogues are "crowded with prayers" because the prayers do not ascend to heaven.

Indeed, it seems that the Divine Presence is absent from such synagogues. The human ego has crowded out the Divine. There's no room in such synagogues for those who seek to pray sincerely, to serve the Almighty in humility, to live for the glory of G-d. When Rabbi Hayyim Angel was still a rabbinical student, he wrote a short statement responding to the question: Who are religious Jews? That statement well reflects ideal Judaism:

"Religious Jews are those whose hearts smile when their mouths do. Religious Jews feel pain in another's misery, joy in another's happiness. They know that perfection is impossible, yet they strive for it. They are trees rooted in the earth with their branches extending towards the heavens. Religious Jews are cisterns who do not lose a drop; they are springs of water which steadily increase. They observe the commandments with an adult's intelligence and a child's enthusiasm. They act in a manner that is a credit to themselves and which earns them the respect of both Jew and non-Jew. They are prepared to sacrifice for G-d, their people, their laws, and their homeland. Religious Jews are a unified mass of sand, yet individual stars who shine on the world."

These words should be taken to heart by all synagogue Jews, especially those in rabbinic or lay positions of leadership. If people do not know what it is to be religious Jews, they also do not know how to properly operate a religious institution.

In this week's Torah portion, we read: "And you shall not profane My

holy name, and I shall be hallowed among the children of Israel; I am the Lord who sanctifies you, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your G-d; I am the Lord" (Vayikra 22:32-3). We are commanded to sanctify G-d's name by living righteous, pious lives. We are commanded not to desecrate G-d's name through inappropriate behavior. The Torah adds the words: "I am the Lord". This phrase reminds us that we are answerable to G-d. We may try to deceive others, we may even try to fool ourselves; but we cannot deceive G-d. People find ways to rationalize their behavior, and to justify themselves, even when their behavior is not proper. The Torah tells us: we must be very careful in evaluating our motives and the impact of our words and deeds. "I am the Lord" who cannot be deceived. We need a proper religious worldview if we are to create proper religious institutions.

Synagogues must be sanctuaries where our prayers can ascend to the gate of heaven, where we can transcend ourselves and reach deeper spiritual insight and fulfillment. If the glory of G-d is forced out by those who promote the glory of humans, then the name of G-d has been profaned. The spiritual loss to our synagogues and to our communities is inestimable. *Rabbi Marc D. Angel and the Institute of Jewish Ideas and Ideals.*

Barren Land: A Hope of a Better Tomorrow Rabbi Berel Wein

The emphasis that the Torah places on the location "Mount Sinai" where Moshe received the Torah and its commandments, and the particular commandment regarding the observance of a sabbatical year, has been an issue of much interest to the commentators on the Torah over the ages. Rashi, quoting the famous rabbinic dictum, states that the words "Mount Sinai" indicate to us

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that just as this particular commandment of the sabbatical year was taught to Moshe on Mount Sinai so too are we to understand that all of the commandments of Judaism emanate from the revelation at Mount Sinai.

But perhaps there is another nuanced lesson here in the mentioning of Mount Sinai, as being the location where this commandment regarding the sabbatical year was first uttered and delivered. The Sinai desert is one of the most barren and inhospitable geographic areas on our globe. The Torah itself describes it as a great, awesome and frightening place, parched of water and short of sustenance, a place of snakes and scorpions.

To speak of a sabbatical year in this context, where and when fields and crops are not to be tended to, seems at first glance to be incongruous, to say the least. We could understand the statement of such a commandment when the Jewish people stood on the brink of entering the Land of Israel or, even more so, when they actually entered the land.

Hearing the command of letting one's fields lie fallow for a year while living in a trackless and arid desert certainly seems to be strange. But the Torah, which is eternal and not bound by time or place, comes to teach us an important lesson regarding life generally and Jewish life particularly.

I had a friend and congregant of

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