

**Shabbat Shalom**  
**from Rabbi Michael Gold**

Candle Lighting Time  
Friday Erev Shabbat 7:39 pm

Services

Shabbat Morning May 10 9:30 am

We continue to pray for the release of the hostages and peace to come to Israel.

**PARSHAT ACHARAI MOT**

**KEDOSHIM ON BEING OLD**

“You shall rise before the aged and show deference to the old; you shall fear your God: I am the Lord.” (Leviticus 19:32)

There is a cute meme that pops up on the internet now and then. It speaks about how difficult it is to get what we want in life. “When you are young, you have the time and energy, but not the money. When you are middle aged, you have the energy and money, but not the time. When you are old you have the money and time, but not the energy.”

I like it but I doubt it is true. Today I serve a synagogue of seniors in a retirement community, many of whom are in their eighties and nineties. And I have never seen such an energetic group of people. When they are not rehearsing songs and dances for a residence show, they are on the golf course or playing pickle ball. Or they are doing volunteer work in our synagogue. Or they are attending my philosophy and religion lectures at Florida Atlantic University, lectures that are intellectually challenging. Despite the stereotype, seniors have energy.

They also have something else extremely important. They have wisdom. They have learned a few things in life, made their share of mistakes, and are wiser for it. That is why many traditional spiritual traditions speak of respect for seniors. Today's portion talks about rising before the hoary head and showing respect for the aged. It is something we often forget in our youth-oriented culture.

As most of you know, I am a lover of old musicals. I keep thinking of the classic Lerner and Loewe musical *Gigi*, which won an Oscar as best picture before eventually reaching the stage on Broadway. A key moment going back to the 1958 movie is when Maurice Chevalier sings, “I am glad I'm not young anymore.” I suppose one can sing that in 1900 Paris. But can we sing that in 2025 America.

Here, everybody loves youth. We want to appear young. That is why plastic

surgeons make millions. That is why people spend on wigs and toupees, to cover thinning and greying hair. That is why we wear clothes for people far younger than us. It is a shame that the popular store *Forever 21* went bankrupt last year. Most of us do not want to dress like teenagers. But I wonder if a store called *Forever 39* would make it in our youth loving culture. I hear too many stories of older workers disrespected by their younger bosses. The business world has proven that having an MBA does make you a mensch.

Those of the Jewish faith may be familiar with the line from the Passover Haggadah, "Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria said, I am like a man of seventy and never understood why we tell the story of the exodus from Egypt at night." It says he was *like* a man of seventy. According to the Talmud (*Berachot* 28a), he was eighteen years old when he was appointed head of the academy. He felt he was too young, but his wife said, if someone hands you a goblet, you take it. A miracle occurred and his hair turned white making him look old. In the Talmud a miracle makes a young man look old. In our contemporary culture, it is a miracle if an old person looks young.

Youth is wonderful. But as they say, "youth is wasted on the young." As we grow older, what we lack in vigor we make up in life experience and wisdom. The Torah teaches to rise before the hoary head. A fundamental law in the Torah is to respect those who are old. As I grow older (but still younger than many of my synagogue members), I appreciate the wisdom of that teaching.