

SEPHARDIC COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

QOL HA'QAHAL

קול הקהל



פרשת שמות-וארא: 15-1, Issue 1/9/15

DEDICATED IN HONOR OF ELI AND JOY HARARI



*Dedicated in Honor of
Eli and Joy Harari*

SCA MISSION

The Sephardic Community Alliance is an organization established to reinforce and preserve the traditional Sephardic way of life of our ancestors based on the principles set forth in our Declaration of Values. Our commitment is to serve as a platform for lay leaders to work in unison with Community Rabbis, institutions and organizations in promoting the perpetuation of these Values. We support all those who embrace our traditions and rich heritage and that uphold and endorse these values.

SCA MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

AHABA VE AHVA
ALLEGRA FRANCO COLLEGE
AVENUE N SEPHARDIC CONGREGATION
BARKAI YESHIVAH
BET RACHAEL SYNAGOGUE
BETH TORAH
BNEI YITZHAK
COMMUNITY MIKVEH
HILLEL YESHIVAH
JERSEY SHORE ERUB
KOL ISRAEL CONGREGATION
MAGEN DAVID BELLE HARBOUR
MAGEN DAVID SYNAGOGUE
MAGEN DAVID OF WEST DEAL

MAGEN DAVID YESHIVAH
MIKDASH ELIAHU
OHEL DAVID AND SHLOMO
OHEL YISHAK OF ALLENHURST
SAFRA SYNAGOGUE OF DEAL
SAFRA SYNAGOGUE OF MANHATTAN
SAFRA SYNAGOGUE OF TURNBERRY
SEPHARDIC BROOKLYN ERUB
SEPHARDIC RABBINICAL COLLEGE
SEPHARDIC SYNAGOGUE OF ELBERON
SEPHARDIC SYNAGOGUE
SHAARE SHALOM
TEBAH EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Qol Ha'Qahal depends on community generosity.
Please send a check to the address below for a tax deductible receipt:
Sephardic Community Alliance
Attn: Hymie Mishan
2 Ethel Road, Suite 205A Edison, NJ 08817
The SCA is a non-profit 501(3)(c) charity.

This is a publication of the SCA.

To contribute articles, for more information and dedication opportunities,
contact QahalNewsletter@gmail.com.

Editor in Chief: Murray J. Mizrahi

Content Editors: Rabbi Harold Sutton, Rabbi Yosef Bitton, Rabbi Nathan Dweck

Design: Lenore Cohen & Sari Mizrahi

© 2014 Qol Ha'qahal. All rights reserved.



QOL HA'QAHAL MISSION

To promote Torah throughout our community by providing a platform for our rabbis, students and institutions.

CONTENTS

<i>The Paradox of Jewish Leadership</i> Rabbi Richard Tobias.....	4
<i>The Glory and Grandeur of Moshe Rabbenu</i> Rabbi Ezra Labaton A"H.....	6
<i>Maqam of the Week</i> Mr. David Betesh, DDS.....	8
<i>The Coming Boycott of Jewish Businesses</i> Rabbi Shmuley Boteach.....	9
<i>Never Forget our Noble Heritage</i> Mr. Sheldon N. Goldman.....	11
<i>Jeremiah</i> Dr. Izak Faiena.....	12
<i>Lahm Ba'ajin and Pizza</i> Mr. Morris Arking.....	14
<i>Community Schools Collaborate</i> Mrs. Lisa Didia.....	15

PLEASE CONTACT QAHALNEWSLETTER@GMAIL.COM TO HAVE THIS PUBLICATION
DELIVERED TO YOUR ORGANIZATION.

PREVIOUS ISSUES ARE NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE
[HTTP://WWW.SEPHARDICCOMMUNITYALLIANCE.ORG/](http://WWW.SEPHARDICCOMMUNITYALLIANCE.ORG/)



Parashat Shemot

THE PARADOX OF JEWISH LEADERSHIP

Rabbi Richard Tobias

Leadership is a funny thing. Or perhaps it is more appropriately said that *effective* leadership is a funny thing. It is the ability to find the balance between listening and speaking, demanding and accepting, facilitating and instructing. It is embodied in those who can simultaneously lead and follow, reprimand and support. It is the great juggling act of being commander in chief and friend, authority figure and comrade.

As if that were not hard enough, Jewish leadership is exponentially more difficult. It requires the ability to lead a people towards spiritual pursuits, all the while engaging them in the physical world. It is the great demand for intellect and entertainment, engagement and disengagement, teacher and student. It is a high position, filled by many but mastered by few. It is, as it has always been, the greatest challenge of the Jewish world.

Looking back on history, one might pinpoint those select few who have filled the position, but none more masterfully than *Moshe Rabbenu*. As we begin *Sefer Shemot* and are introduced to Moshe, it is imperative upon the reader to discern what it is that made him the greatest leader of all time.

The story essentially begins in the third chapter of *Sefer Shemot*. Moshe meets G-d by the burning bush and gets his first divine vision. G-d says to him: *וַיֹּאמֶר, אֶל-תַּקַּרְבִּי הָלֵם; שַׁל-נַעֲלֶיךָ, מֵעַל רַגְלֶיךָ--כִּי הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עומד עָלָיו, אֲדָמָת-קֹדֶשׁ הוּא* "and He said: 'Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground'" (Shemot 3:5). How strange, that the first thing G-d ever tells the greatest man that ever lived is, remove your shoes. How mundane? How anti-climactic and superbly banal? Or is it?

G-d appears to Moshe in the burning bush; what the Torah refers to as the *seneh*. It is a word that appears five times in a span of three *pesuqim*, three of those five being in one *pasuq* alone. Clearly it is a *milat manha*, a thematic word, towards which the Torah is drawing our attention. Why is so much emphasis placed on one word?

The answers to all of the questions posed above are the solution to our overarching query: from where did Moshe get his leadership inspiration, and what does effective, Jewish leadership look like?

"Take off your shoes." How seemingly insignificant but utterly brilliant. G-d gives Moshe the first, and possibly most important, advice on being a Jewish leader. He commands him to take off his shoes so that his body becomes one with the Earth below him. G-d refers to that Earth as "holy ground." Hashem tells Moshe, clearly and openly, that his mission as a Jewish leader is to impart upon the people an important message. "Tell them," says *Bore Olam*, "that spirituality does not only exist in Heaven. Communicate to them that G-d, spirituality, and *qedusha*, exist anywhere and everywhere, even in the soil of this very Earth."

People are always mistaken to think that religion and spirituality are compartmentalized. G-d and his Torah exist in the synagogue, at the Shabbat table, under the *huppah*, and in the *Yeshivah*. *Haqadosh Baruch Hu* tells Moshe with the words, "remove your shoes," that he has to convey to the people that Torah should and must permeate their life, through in and throughout. It is everywhere. They must incorporate it into their businesses, their relationships, their vacation spots, and their homes. "*Admat qodesh hu*," the Earth is holy.

Lesson number one in effective, Jewish leadership is to lead the people in a way that makes them realize that religion is a way of life, not a concept that exists in a certain time or place. Moshe, to his credit, embodies that concept throughout his life, fostering the people in a way that tells them that spirituality exists all around them – in Egypt, in the sea, in the mountains, in the middle of the desert, in the sky, on the ground, outside of Israel, and most prominently, in the land of Israel.

Jewish leaders must not teach religion, they must be religion. They must encourage their followers to see the world through the prism of Torah and solve the world's problems through the brilliance of G-d's word. The secular and the religious can and must be interwoven together in order to truly see the masterpiece that is G-d's world. The paradox of Jewish leadership



"Take off your shoes."

is to embrace both the Heavenly and the Earthly and to teach your followers how to comfortably do the same.

Moshe meets Hashem at the *seneh*. The thorn bush, write the *mefarshim*, symbolizes many things. Hence it was chosen as the place of their meeting and is repeated multiple times in the text. It is the very bush through which G-d's voice came that gave Moshe other lessons in effective leadership. For the sake of our discussion, we will focus on three of those messages.

The *pasuq* tells us that the thorn bush was in flames but was not being consumed. The *Keli Yaqar* comments that this very idea was another eternal message delivered to Moshe. "Throughout history," G-d was telling Moshe, "the Jewish people will be

"The paradox of Jewish leadership is to embrace both the Heavenly and the Earthly & to teach your followers how to comfortably do the same."

persecuted, oppressed and driven from their lands. They will be tortured by the outside world and foreign enemies. Tell them that I will always be there to protect them in those times. The outside world will never consume them." The problem, however, is not the outside world, not the flames surrounding the bush, but the thorns that make up the bush itself. The greatest problem that Jews will face as a nation is their own internal strife. I will keep the enemies away but they will be thorns in each others' side. Tell the Jewish nation that I can and will protect them from outsiders, but that I will not protect them from themselves. If they do not unite, they will be the cause of their own demise.

The second lesson in Jewish leadership is that the leader must unite his people. He must force them to tolerate and embrace differences. He must remove the thorns that divide his people and rally them around the same common goals and vision. It is a difficult task, but it is the task at hand. It is a challenge with which Jewish leaders around the world still struggle, trying to find the cure for a disease that has plagued the nation for millennia.

The *seneh* is highlighted to emphasize the paradox of Jewish leadership: to foster unity but encourage difference. The leader must be able to nurture nationhood but praise individuality. He must teach the people that one and the same are not, in fact, one and the same. Moshe is given those instructions by *Borei Olam* himself, and dedicates his life to that pursuit.

The third lesson is expressed in the words of Rashi. He writes that Hashem appeared to Moshe in a thorn bush to symbolize the fact that G-d is with the Jewish people in their pain. The thorn bush is the lowliest of plants, mirroring the Jews who were at a low point in their history. Nonetheless, G-d was with them. The message that Moshe was to deliver to the nation was that of hope. The message that *every* Jewish leader must communicate is that of hope.

No other nation in the world has been persecuted to the extent to which the Jews have been. It would be easy, perhaps even logical, to give up hope in the face of despair. From slavery, to expulsion, to pogroms, to the Holocaust, to Intifadas, the Jews have been dealt blow after blow. The question that would continue to arise would be "why"? The Jewish leader must be prepared to answer that question, to give hope in a place where even hope is in despair. To tell the people that G-d, as he always has, will deliver them from pain and that the sun will rise again, as it did on Ya'qob when he fought the greatest struggle of his life. The paradox of Jewish leadership is to inspire hope, but preach accountability. It is to espouse self-defense and *hishtadlut* (initiative), but believe in and motivate prayer. It is to look the broken soul in the eyes and say, "G-d is with you in despair, as am I, and together we will get through this." The leader's challenge is to pose questions that help strengthen belief, and to be a pillar of fortitude to those around him. That is the message of the *seneh*; the lowliest of plants, through which G-d himself spoke.

Jewish leadership is a funny thing. To do it effectively is an art. To watch it in action is to watch a symphony. To carry the burden is a privilege.

Rabbi Tobias is currently the Rabbi of Young Beth Torah and Dean of Students at Magen David Yeshivah High School.

THE GLORY AND GRANDEUR OF MOSHE RABBENU

Rabbi Ezra Labaton A"H

Moshe Rabbenu achieved what no other human being achieved or could achieve. He became the Master Prophet- the one who spoke to *Bore Olam* אֱלֹהִים אֶל פְּנֵים “face to face”- as the final verses in *Sefer Debarim* attest (*Debarim* 34:10). The Master Prophet rightly earned the epithet, *Adon Haneviim- master of the prophets*.

Yet, we wonder, what were the character traits of the one who achieved so much? Were these character traits directly linked to the status he achieved as the Master Prophet? And what role did these character traits play in shaping the character and destiny of the nation that Moshe Rabbenu founded? It seems to us that all of the above questions could be answered by a close reading of the opening Mosaic narratives of *Sefer Shemot*.

“Moshe sees & feels. As a result, he is moved to action.”

We begin by noting that the biological parents of the child, destined to become Moshe, are not named. We are simply told that a man from the tribe of Levi took a woman from the tribe of Levi. Later, it is revealed to us the names of the child's parents. Why are the parents' names not mentioned, why delay their identification? Perhaps the text wants the reader to see this child as ordinary, as nothing special- his parents are so indistinct that they are introduced to the reader anonymously. This notion takes on significance as we note how important names are in the biblical narrative. Going back to Adam in the Garden of Eden, who names Hava, and on to the Patriarchs whose names are changed (Abraham and Jacob), all the way to the discussion Moshe has with El-Shadai as to the Divine name (“מִה שְׁמוֹ”), nomenclature plays a great role in the Bible. Yet, here, the names of this child's parents remain unknown- as the child himself. He is not immediately named by his biological parents, but by an anonymous Egyptian princess, who had compassion on the child and retrieved him from the river reeds. How strange that this child is named by someone outside the circle of Israelites. Yet again, this indicates that all that Moshe achieves is by dint of his own efforts. His biological and step-parents play no role. From this early narrative we see that an anonymous child, born to anonymous parents, does not seem to be destined for greatness- unless the child acts to secure his own future as a people shaping individual.

This he does. The child grows into a young adult. He intentionally leaves his palatial surroundings (“וַיֵּצֵא אֶל אֶחָיו” *Shemot* 2:11) to mingle with his brothers. The text, significantly, now tells us, “He sees their affliction...” (*Shemot* 2:11) This young adult is not self-absorbed in the trappings of power and royalty. Rather, as Rashi points out, he sees with his eyes and feels with his heart. Moshe's “seeing” is not a dispassionate objective view of reality, as another royal prince might “see.” Mosaic seeing has an emotional quality to it.

Moshe sees and feels. As a result, he is moved to action. He strikes the Egyptian who is striking his brother. Though the one struck is a Hebrew slave, he is still Moshe's brother. This emotional bond moves the heart, and pushes the seeing/feeling Moshe to lash out. The Egyptian, deserving death, (as the Midrash points out) is killed. Moshe acts beyond all rational considerations, with the “logic of the heart” rather than the “logic of the mind.” The compassion felt by the young Moshe for his “brother” (note that this is emphasized by the text) becomes a defining characteristic of the Jewish people. As Jews we are not only motivated by the logic of the mind to do what's right, but by the logic of the heart as well. At times, we must push aside all rational considerations and enter into the fray, as Moshe.

HaRambam sees this quality as so significant that he questions the Jewish identity of one who is cruel and has no compassion. “How could a brother not have compassion on another brother?” He asks rhetorically (see *Matenot LaAniyim*, 10:2). A defining characteristic of the Jewish persona is compassion.

Note, as well, that *Haqadosh Baruch Hu* also sees fit to describe Himself as the Lord of compassion. In numerous texts throughout the Tanach, we find this self declared description. The most powerful of these texts is certainly found in *Shemot* 34:6, where the thirteen attributes of *Bore Olam* are taught to Moshe, and in *Debarim* 10:18,

“HaRambam suggests that a study of G-d's Creation – through an understanding of the physics and biology of the natural order- brings one to a love of Haqadosh Baruch Hu.”

where God describes Himself as He who loves the *ger*- stranger - and other unfortunate, powerless and unprotected members of society. Indeed, though HaRambam teaches that there are no definitive terms to describe *Bore Olam*, the attributes of loving compassion and kindness reflect most closely the Divine essence. It is no accident that Moshe demonstrates these qualities early on, and reflects this Divine quality.

As a result of Moshe's impulsive empathetic act of compassion, he must flee the anger of the King. Crossing the desert, he finds himself resting by a well in Midyan. Sitting, he "sees" an act of injustice perpetrated against a few Midianite women, shepherding their father's sheep. Though they filled the water trough for their sheep, they were chased away ("וַיִּגְרְשׁוּם") by the more powerful male shepherds. Moshe observes this injustice and rises up to save these women ("וַיִּשְׁעֶן") from this indignity (*Shemot* 2:17). (Every act of injustice is an act of indignity, an attack on the "צֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים" - Divine Image-status, of the individual- See *Beresheet* 1:26, 27.)

Here, Moshe sets the tone for the Jewish people. Repeatedly, throughout the Sacred Scriptures, the Jewish people are commanded to pursue justice. They are told in *Sefer Debarim* that without this pursuit, they will not inherit the land that God has promised them (*Debarim* 16:18-20). This value is not only emphasized in the five books of *Torat Moshe*, but throughout all of the prophetic literature as well. The hallmark of the post Mosaic prophet is his demand for justice (see for example *Amos* 5:24).

As to be expected, this call for justice is a "character trait" of the Almighty as well. His demand for justice is a reflection of His personal pursuit of justice ("כְּבִיכּוֹל"). Note, Abraham the Patriarch established his family and followers on the principles of justice and righteousness (צִדְקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט - see *Beresheet* 18:19). Subsequently, his demand for justice for the people of Sedom is accepted by *Bore Olam*. Indeed, the "Judge of the whole world" will and must do justice. In other biblical texts there are numerous self-descriptions of the Almighty as "עוֹשֶׂה מִשְׁפָּט" and "דִּין אֱלֹהִים". Thus, Moshe's initial concern for and pursuit of justice for the daughters of Yitro not only foreshadow the Divine demand for justice, but reflects this Divine trait as well.



*Moses is Discovered:
Engraving by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld,
Mid 19th Century*

"One must seek out with intense desire the presence of Bore Olam..."

The third narrative of great significance that defines the character of Moshe is found in the 3rd chapter of *Shemot*. Here we find Moshe comfortably settled in the family framework of Yitro. Married, with a child, he works as a shepherd for his father-in-law. He leads the sheep to a distant part of the desert, and there sees a great marvel: a bush aflame but not consumed ("הַסִּנֵּה בֹועֵר וְאֵינּוּ אֵכָל" *Shemot* 3:2). Unaware of any theological implications, he declares: "I will turn aside and see this great sight: why is this burning bush not consumed (*Shemot* 3:3)? Moshe hears the Divine Voice, and responds properly: "Hineni." Then, upon hearing the first part of the message, he hides his face ("וַיִּסְתֵּר מֹשֶׁה פָּנָיו כִּי" *Shemot* 3:6). Had Moshe lacked the intellectual curiosity of seeking out an understanding of the marvel he witnessed; had Moshe responded in any other way other than "Hineni"; had Moshe not hidden his face in fear—all would have been lost. *Bore Olam* needed the one who was to be chosen as the Master Prophet, to aggressively seek out an explanation for the supernatural sight he witnessed, and then know when and how to withdraw.

The intense motivation to seek out and attempt to understand that which is beyond understanding has to be balanced by a fearful withdrawal from the Presence- once it is revealed. Here, Moshe hides his face in a proper gesture of humility for one destined to become *Adon HaNeviim*.

This dialectic cuts to the spiritual core, not only of the Master Prophet, but also to all who seek religious knowledge. The latter's quest for more understanding and more in-depth knowledge of the wondrous marvels of the Creator, must balance this quest with withdrawal, as Moshe. Those who seek must know when to "hide one's face" when confronted with the Divine Presence and the Divine Voice.

HaRambam, in *Yesode HaTorah* 2:2, well captures this dialectic in speaking of the *misvah* to love and stand in awe of the

Continued on page 8

...Continued from page 7

Holy One. On the one hand, the religious seeker is commanded to love G-d. Properly done, this expresses a burning desire to know *Bore Olam* (“בּוֹרֵא עוֹלָם”). HaRambam suggests that a study of G-d’s Creation – through an understanding of the physics and biology of the natural order- brings one to a love of *Haqadosh Baruch Hu*. Yet, once the goal of loving G-d is realized, or about to be realized, the religious seeker is shaken to his core and must withdraw.

Moshe Rabbenu’s initial experiences at the burning bush serve as the model for all those who follow. One must seek out the Divine Presence, yet withdraw once one realizes the spiritual power of the moment.

These three opening narratives define the character and personality of Moshe- *Adon Haneviim*. Initially he sees and feels his brothers’ pain. Compassion and empathy are essential traits of Moshe and must be part and parcel of every Jew’s psychological makeup. Equally significant is Moshe’s pursuit of justice. The Jew dare not sit idly by and witness injustice. As Moshe acted out of a sense of righteous indignation in the face of injustice, so too must every Jew act when confronted with persecution and oppression. Yet to be a Jew- part of the nation of Israel- Moshe teaches us that more is required. One must seek out with intense desire the presence of *Bore Olam* and be prepared at the revelation of the Presence to withdraw humbly into the shadows of “hiddenness.” Moshe, as the model, boldly stamped his personality upon all the subsequent generations of the Jewish people.

Rabbi Dr. Labaton A”H was an expert on Maimonides and his philosophy and long time rabbi of Magen David Congregation of West Deal, NJ.

MAQAM OF THE WEEK

Mr. David Betesh, DDS

For **Shabbat Shemot**, the morning prayers are conducted in *maqam Rast* or *Bayat* according to most Syrian sources. *Maqam Rast*, derived from the Arabic word *ras* (head), is appropriate, because it is applied as we begin a new *Humash*. *Maqam Bayat* is also an accepted option based on the narrative in the first *aliyah* of the association with women (the Hebrew word *bat* means daughter). There we read about the Pharoah’s decree to kill all male infants, but to spare all females (*bat*). We celebrate the heroism of the Hebrew midwives, Shifra and Puah, for risking their lives to save the infants. *PIZMON SEFER TORAH*: “*El Me’od Na’alah*” (266-I). *HAFTARAH*: Tradition of Aleppo and Damascus: Jeremiah 1:1-2:3. Tradition of Baghdad: Ezekiel 16:1-14. *MISHMARA*: *Shemot* (Exodus 1:1- 6:1), 1 Kings 7-10, Psalms 137-150, *Mishnah Ta’anit* and *Megilah*.

For **Shabbat Va’era**, the morning prayers are conducted in *Maqam Hoseni* according to most Syrian sources. *Hoseni* (Arabic: ‘beautiful’), the *maqam* described as “a high *maqam bayat*,” is applied to the prayers, according to some sources, while other sources disagree. *Hoseni* is applied when there is an aspect in the *perasha* relating to *Matan Torah*. We are reminded of the beauty of *Matan Torah* at the opening of this *perasha* when we read the words “*ani Adonai*” which is similar to the opening of the Ten Commandments (*anochi Adonai*). In Jerusalem, Knis Ades will apply *Maqam Nawah* to the prayers so that they will be able to sing “*MiYemallel*” (361-II); a *pizmon* about the ten plagues. *MISHMARA*: *Va’era* (Exodus 6:2- 9:35), 1 Kings 11-19, Job 1-6, *Mishnah Makot*

Courtesy of the Sephardic Pizmonim Project, www.pizmonim.com



Israel Spotlight

THE COMING BOYCOTT OF JEWISH BUSINESSES

Rabbi Shmuley Boteach

I saw a nasty thing walking with my children in New York City on the Sabbath. On Madison Ave in the mid-sixties, we saw a group of people, chanting, singing.

Was it Christmas carolers? As we got closer we saw it was a protest. An anti-Israel protest.

But this one was not outside an Israeli Consulate or Embassy. It was outside a commercial, retail store. A diamond store. Owned by Lev Leviev, the Israeli billionaire businessman and philanthropist.

"Glitz and glam. He steals Palestinian land."

I was appalled. I got closer. The protesters were accusing Leviev, a private Jewish citizen, of stealing Palestinian land, persecuting Palestinians, and supporting an imperial Israel.

I asked the protesters who Leviev was and why they were protesting him. Was he Israel's Prime Minister or Foreign Minister? At least the Ambassador. How else to explain why they would be protesting outside a business simply owned by a Jew.

They told me he was an Israeli who supported Israel's persecution of the Palestinians. He was a known, high-profile Jewish businessman. They were there to make sure no one bought his products.

I had had enough. I raised my hands into the air, in the mist of the protest, and said loudly, "Long Live Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East. The only country in that dark region that is a bastion of liberty and human rights. A place where Palestinian women need never fear honor killings. A place where Israeli Arabs have more guaranteed rights than any Arab nation. A place where gay Palestinians need not fear being shot in the head on false charges of collaboration. A place where Arabs can protest publicly, just like all of you, and not be shot. Long live righteous and majestic Israel."

Instantly, all the protestors forgot about Leviev and

turned their ire toward me. I was now the devil. They were shouting at me, abusing me. "F— off. Go F— yourself."

I got louder.

"How revolting of all of you to protest a business because it's owned by a Jew." What is this? Nuremberg 1934? Absolutely reprehensible.

My kids were now engaged in the fight, singing "Am Yisrael Chai. The Jewish people are alive and well." We were louder than the protestors.

I started saying "Down with Hamas which allows honor killings of innocent Palestinian women. Down with Hamas that slaughters innocent Palestinian gay men. Down with the Palestinian...." and I was about to say "... Authority for refusing to go to elections in 10 years and creating a dictatorship, robbing the Palestinian people of their freedom" when I saw

that someone was filming me on the Sabbath.

The police came over, trying to quell the confrontation. They have a permit, he said. They have the right to protest. God bless America. I respect their right for public demonstration. But I also respect my right to write this in a column.

Jews of the world. Wake up. There has never been an assault on us like this in our lifetimes. And we are allowing it. Through our timidity and through closing our eyes and pretending not to see, it's growing. Our enemies are arraying against us. They have substituted anti-Semitism for Anti-Israelism. But it's the same sentiment.

Jew-hatred, pure and simple.

This holiday season the world's anti-Semites are giving thanks for the existence of the State of Israel. If not for Israel they would not have camouflage for their Jew-hatred. Israel has given them cover. It's not the Jews we hate, but just the Jewish state. It's not because we have an inherent dislike of Jews. We just hate occupation.



This David's Star was used in a Ghetto to discriminate against Jews

Continued on page 10

...Continued from page 9

But then they call each other on their iPhones, even though they're made in China which has been occupying Tibet since 1950.

But only a weak community would give these haters a fig leaf to cover over their clear bigotry, prejudice, and hatred. My kids were flabbergasted that a private Jewish business could draw major accusations of Palestinian persecution. It suited the protesters well that it was a diamond dealer. Perfect stereotype.

But who would be next? Which Jewish business would they target next?

A few hours later we went to the Chabad public Menorah lighting outside the Plaza hotel on 5th Ave. There was a small protest against Israel there was well. Joining the protest was a 20-something man who told us all that the Jews owned all of 5th Avenue. He pointed across the street at the famous Apple 5th Avenue store. "Apple is owned by Jews." I looked at him.

"Um, erg, hmmm. Did you know that Steve Jobs was the son of an Arab-American? So how does that square with the Jews owning Apple?"

"Well the Jews bought it from Jobs with the endless money they have."

Aha.

I thought to myself, is there no respite from all this Jew-hatred? Can we not get away from them even at a Menorah lighting?

The other day Harvard University kicked out SodaStream from their cafeteria for the terrible sin of employing hundreds of Palestinians at a plant in Maale Adumim that treats Arabs as the absolute equals of their Israeli counterparts. Without SodaStream these Palestinian families would be destitute. But Palestinian activists at Harvard, animated by hatred of Israel over love for Palestinian lives, demanded a boycott and the caterer capitulated.

And so it goes. Jewish timidity in the United States is allowing more and more of these outrages to take place.¹

I wonder if we recognize the seriousness of what's happening or will it engulf us before we take decisive action?

What is needed is an immediate move to organize Jewish students on campus to respond publicly to the anti-Israel onslaught at Universities. We need public demonstrations against Israel-hatred, anti-Semitism, and in favor of freedom and democracy in the Middle East. Jewish students should not just be fighting BDS but should be going on offense to push through resolutions in the City Councils sanctioning Hamas and the Palestinian Authority for not holding elections in a decade and transforming Palestinian society into dictatorships.

Organizations who dare hold ordinary Jews

"They have substituted anti-Semitism for Anti-Israelism. But it's the same sentiment. Jew-hatred, pure and simple."

responsible for actions in the Middle East – which would be the equivalent of protesting an Arab-owned department store in Detroit for the butchery of Bashar Assad in Syria – should themselves be targeted for public demonstrations, calling them what they are: anti-Semites.

And let's honor those brave individuals who have stood up to BDS.

Every June our organization hosts the International Champions of Jewish Values Gala Awards Dinner in New York. Last year the Hollywood celebrity we honored was Sean Penn for his unrivaled bravery in going to Bolivia and rescuing the life of a Jewish businessman who had been wrongly incarcerated.

The year before we honored my dear friend Dr. Mehmet Oz, a Muslim, for his tireless efforts to promote the value of human life by getting us all to live more healthy lives and for his continued friendship with the Jewish people. A few months after the award we hosted Mehmet and his family in Israel.

This year we intend to honor Scarlett Johansson for standing up to the pressure to abandon SodaStream, a company that is a model of Arab-Israeli brotherhood and fraternity.

Scarlett, if you're out there, please come to New York and accept. The dinner is on 3 June, 2015.

Rabbi Boteach is a Jewish author who has published 30 books.

¹ Editor's Note: Due to public outcry the Harvard Soda Stream ban was recently reversed.



Sephardic Heritage

NEVER FORGET OUR NOBLE HERITAGE NUNCA OLVIDES MUESTRA HISTORIA DESTINGUIDA

נונכה אולבידים מואיסטרה איסטוריה דיסטניגידה

Mr. Sheldon N. Goldman

CHAPTER 1- Beginnings up to 711 CE

From the Hebrew Language you may find that some of the names of the cities in Spain have a familiar ring, cities such as Toledo, Cordova, Escalona, Malaga, and Sevilla. Linguists maintain that these city names derive from Hebrew. They suggest that Toledo stems from the Hebrew word “toledot” which means “(city of) generations”; Cordova from Aramaic “karta taba” which means “good city”; Escalona may come from the Israeli city of Ashqelon; Malaga may derive from “melakha” (work); and Sevilla from “shefela” (lowlands). What makes this theory more interesting and more probable is the fact that all of these cities are comparatively close to one another.

There is other evidence of the existence of Jews in Spain in ancient times. King Solomon ruled the Jews in Israel from 970 BCE to 928 BCE. The tombstone of one of his generals was found in Murviedro. The First Temple was destroyed in 586 BCE and the Second Temple in 70 CE. As a result, at both times Jerusalem’s aristocratic families were deported, first by the Babylonians and then by Titus. These aristocrats settled on the Spanish shore. Between 200 BCE and 200 CE there was extensive migration of all kinds of people throughout the Roman Diaspora, Spain being one of those destinations, and Jews were among the travelers. In Jane Gerber’s book, *The Jews of Spain*, it says:

“Migration of Jews throughout the Roman Diaspora was so widespread that the ancient Greek geographer Strabo reportedly exclaimed, ‘This people has already made its way into every city, and it is not easy to find any place in the habitable world which has not received this nation and in which it has not made its power felt’ (Josephus, Antiquities, XIV, 115)”.

“There is other evidence of the existence of Jews in Spain in ancient times.”



Map of Via Augusta in Roman Hispania between Gades (Cadiz) and Narbo Martius (Narbonne)

Phoenician and Syrian traders did business all along the Mediterranean coast and Jewish business people followed along. They settled in Italy, Spain, and on the North African coast. In Spain many old tombstones have been found that contain inscriptions in three languages: Hebrew, Latin and Greek, and some of the tombstones have traditional Jewish symbols alongside their Latin inscriptions. Also, Rome was famous for the construction of roads and highways, some of which are in existence today. One of the roads they built that contributed to Jewish migration and settlement in Spain was the

Via Augusta. It was a 1300 mile road that began in Rome, traveled through Italy to Gaul (France) and terminated in southwest Spain at the port of Cadiz.

This road was built about 200 CE and brought with it many Jews. Jews were making their presence known in Spain to such a degree that a special council had to be convened in Elvira in 306 CE to discuss “the Jewish problem.” Participants were especially concerned about the close social relations

Continued on page 13



JEREMIAH

Dr. Izak Faiena

Haftarah

Introduction and Background

Jeremiah lived during one of the most tumultuous periods in Jewish history: the destruction of the first temple. Jeremiah was the son of a priest (Hilkiah) from the city of 'Anatot and a descendant of 'Eli. He began prophesying in the thirteenth year of the reign of King Uzziah in 627 B.C.E, when Jeremiah was a "na'ar" (a young lad). He was initially reluctant to take on the challenge, but felt compelled to speak Hashem's word, as he says "You enticed me, Hashem, and I was enticed, You overpowered me and You prevailed."¹ The early part of Jeremiah's prophecy was during the decline of the Assyrian Empire that brought about a brief respite for the Jews from harsh rule. This period led Uzziah to enact his great religious reforms, which included mainly the renewed centralization of worship in Jerusalem. Uzziah's reforms, however, did not reach the hearts of the people, as they continued to be rebellious. Jeremiah's numerous prophecies concerning Jerusalem, Judah, and Israel, most of which announced punishment in an effort to persuade them to return to Hashem went unheeded. The Jews opposed Jeremiah from the very beginning of his prophecy. The citizens of 'Anatot tried to stop him and even attempted to kill him. Jeremiah later moved to Jerusalem, but he endured severe opposition there as well, which continued with Uzziah's successors. In 609 B.C.E the Babylonians crushed the Egyptians and Judah was now under Babylonian rule. Jeremiah was a constant opponent of King Yehoiakim, an Egyptian sympathizer who led his nation into war, which led to a series of deportations for the nation's elite. The first of these occurred in 597 B.C.E., ending the brief reign of Yehoiakim's successor, King Yehoiachin, who was exiled to Babylon along with the upper class.

“When the Babylonians offered Jeremiah a comfortable life in exile in recognition for his efforts, he refused it in order to remain with his people...”

Throughout the stormy reign of King Sidqiyah (597-586 B.C.E.), Jeremiah advised King Sidqiyah to be faithful to Nebuchadnezzar, as he believed that the Babylonians were the agents of divine destruction but Sidqiyah refused. Jeremiah therefore refused to support a rebellion in 594 B.C.E. against the Babylonians and he refused to encourage any national hopes of the return of the Jews who were deported from Jerusalem in 597 B.C.E. Jeremiah was therefore regarded as a traitor, and was accused of trying to defect to the enemy. As a result, the King turned him over to the princes, who threw him into a dungeon, the bottom of which was filled with mud, into which Jeremiah sank. Jeremiah would have died there had he not been rescued by Ebed-Melech, an Ethiopian slave of the king's house. Sidqiyah's resistance resulted in the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem, and the consequent suffering that ensued. This second and fatal invasion came in 586 B.C.E. and resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah, along with the Temple of Solomon, as well as the deportation of many of the remaining Jews to Babylon. When the Babylonians offered Jeremiah a comfortable life in exile in recognition for his efforts, he refused it in order to remain with his people and begin the process of rebuilding even though the exile had just begun. Ultimately, Jeremiah fled to Egypt, and eventually died there.

Haftarah and Connections to Moshe

This week's *haftarah* is the first chapter of the book of Jeremiah, and has many connections to this week's *perasha* as well as Moshe. There are the common themes of Hashem's call to action, resistance by the prophets, and divine assurance in these texts. The *haftarah* introduces the prophet as son of Hilkiah from 'Anatot, a village of *Kohanim* since the time of Joshua, which also identifies Jeremiah as a descendant of 'Eli (1:1-3). The second part recounts Jeremiah's appointment as a prophet

by Hashem (1:4-10), and his account of the two visions that confirmed his prophetic role (1:11-19). Finally, the *haftarah* ends with Hashem favorably recalling the early period of the relationship with Israel in the wilderness (2:1-3). These highlights have many connections with this week's *perasha* and Moshe. Both prophets were of Levitical descent and were called upon during a difficult time in Jewish history. When Hashem calls upon Moshe, he complains that "I am not eloquent" and of "slow speech" (Ex 4:10). Jeremiah too complains that he is unable to speak because he is a young lad (*na'ar*) (Jer 1:7). Hashem rejects their complaints and commands both of them that they shall speak as commanded (Ex 7:2, Jer 1:7). The *maqel* (stick) vision of Jeremiah is reminiscent of Moshe's *matte* (staff), an image which also appears in Numbers 17, where the sprouting of almond blossoms on Aaron's and the Levites' staffs marks them as the divinely chosen priests of Israel. The Rabbis in the *Midrash (Pesiqta DeRab Kahana 112a)* also made further keen observations:

As Moses was a prophet for forty years, so was Jeremiah; as Moses prophesied concerning Judah and Benjamin, so did Jeremiah; as Moses' own tribe [the Levites under Korah] rose up against him, so did Jeremiah's tribe revolt against him [especially the accusations of Johanan son of Kareah]; Moses was cast into the water, Jeremiah into a pit; as Moses was saved by a slave (the slave of Pharaoh's daughter); so, Jeremiah was rescued by a slave (Ebed-melech); Moses reprimanded the people in discourses; so did Jeremiah.

Interestingly, along the same lines, whereas Moshe spent forty years to lead the Jews out of Egypt and into the Promised Land, Jeremiah's forty years witnessed the exile of his people from the Promised Land. He eventually lived out the rest of his life in Egypt. There are numerous other parallels between Jeremiah's life and Moshe, which are beyond the scope of this article. It is quite clear, however, that Jeremiah perceives his monumental mission to be that of Moshe's, and in a sense, models his approach after the great Moshe Rabbenu.

Dr. Izak Faiena is a Graduate of Yeshiva University and Albert Einstein College of Medicine, currently training in urology and urologic oncology at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

¹ Jer. 20:7



Ancient glazed ceramic tiles from the gates of Nebuchadnezzar's palace in ancient Babylon (Iraq) depict a lion (604-562 BC)

NEVER FORGET OUR NOBLE HERITAGE ...continued from page 11

between neighboring Christians and Jews. Precisely because Jews were still an influential force in Spain, the Elvira Council deemed it necessary to insulate Christian believers from the seductions of Judaism by derogating both its tenets and its leaders. Restrictions were imposed to limit opportunities for social interaction between the two faiths: Christians were specifically warned not to ask rabbis to bless their fields. In short, the work of the council typified an emergent body of legislation designed to isolate Jews from the larger community throughout the Empire while hammering out a doctrine that defined and affirmed the lowly place of Judaism in history. In 409 the Germanic tribes ran the Romans out of Spain. Eventually the Visigoths became the dominant force in Spain and drove out tribes such as the Vandals and others. Their religion was Christian but not Catholic. They practiced Arianism. They ruled over many Catholic farmers and it was useful for these rulers to tolerate them and the Jews that lived there.

Mr. Goldman is a retired Chemical Engineer who is a member of Congregations Beth Torah and Kol Israel. From 1978 through 1992 he was the Editor of the Beth Torah Bulletin. He was Secretary of Beth Torah from 1980 through 1995 and is still the Editor of the Beth Torah Calendar.

LAHM BA'AJIN AND PIZZA

Mr. Morris Arking

In *Shulhan 'Arukh OH 168:7 Maran* quotes three different opinions for the definition of “*Pat HaBa-ah B’Kisnin*” (baked grain foods that are *Bore’ Mine’ M’zonot*). The first opinion is if the food is shaped like a pocket (*Kisnin* would mean shaped like a ‘Kis’-pocket), and filled with honey or sugar and nuts and spices. The second opinion is if the dough was mixed with honey or oil or milk or spices (or fruit juice) before it was baked, provided that the taste of the added ingredient is recognizable in the dough. The third opinion is a dry crunchy food like *Ka’ak*. *Maran* concludes that the *Halakhah* is like all three opinions and any baked grain food that has any of those characteristics is *Bore’ Mine’ M’zonot*. Then in *Shulhan 'Arukh OH 168:17* he writes that ‘*Pasteda*’ that is baked in the oven and filled with meat or fish or cheese is *HaMossi*.



M’zonot or HaMossi?

The later authorities ask why the *Pasteda* is not *M’zonot* since it is a pocket shaped dough that is filled with meat or cheese etc. The *Magen Abraham* (168:44) explained that the pocket shape is only *M’zonot* when it is filled with nuts or sweets or spices, since that type of food is considered a snack, but when it is filled with meat or cheese or fish it is considered a meal and it requires *HaMossi* and *Birkat HaMazon*. The *Ture’ Zahab* however understood *Maran* differently and he said that *Maran* only requires *HaMossi* on *Pasteda* when you have eight ounces or more. According to the *Ture’ Zahab* (168:20) *Maran* added this *Halakhah* to teach that even though the filling is the main ingredient in the *Pasteda* (the meat/cheese/fish) it is still *M’zonot* for less than eight ounces, and *HaMossi* for eight ounces or more.

Ribbi Yosef Sittehon, who was an important Rabbi in Halab in the 19th century, and the author of ten books, discussed this *Halakhah* in his book *Birkhot Shamayim (Siman Dalet)*, on the laws of *B’rakhot*. According to Rabbi Sittehon the *B’rakhah* for *Lahm Ba’ajin* is *M’zonot* since the *Ture’ Zahab* makes *M’zonot* even when the dough was baked with meat or cheese. He writes that we should follow the *Ture’ Zahab* instead of the *Magen Abraham* since it seems like the *Ture’ Zahab*’s explanation of *Shulhan 'Arukh* is consistent with what *Maran* brought in the *Bet Yosef* and because several *Aharonim* followed the *Ture’ Zahab*. He also applied the rule *Safeq B’rakhot L’Haqel* (when there is a doubt about reciting *B’rakhot*, do not recite them). In this case he applied this rule to *Birkat HaMazon*. Based on this Rabbi Sittehon would say *M’zonot* on *Pizza* as well.

However Hakham Yisshaq Shehebar, who was born in Halab in the 20th century, and was the student of Hakham Mose’ Tawil (Chief Rabbi of Halab until 1958), did not agree with Rabbi Yosef Sittehon. Hakham Yisshaq (who was the Chief Rabbi of Argentina) discussed *Lahm Ba’ajin* in his book *Yisshaq Y’ranen (Siman Tet Vav)*. He wrote that we follow the *Ture’ Zahab* for meat or cheese in pocket shaped dough, but that since *Lahm Ba’ajin* and *Pizza* is not shaped like a pocket it is *HaMossi* even according to the *Ture’ Zahab*. And he quotes Hakham Moshe Mizrahi who was the Rosh Ab Bet Din in Halab until he passed away in 1955, who ruled that *Lahm Ba’ajin* is *HaMossi*.

Hakham ‘Obadyah Yosef ruled like the *Magen Abraham* (*Hazon ‘Obadyah-Tu BiShbat* pg. 67, also see pg. 60), and therefore according to Hakham ‘Obadyah, even meat or cheese or fish inside a pocket shaped dough is *HaMossi*. Iraqi *Sombusak* is a regular bread dough that is filled with meat or cheese and is *HaMossi* according to Hakham ‘Obadyah. This is also the opinion of Hakham Shaul Kassin (father of our former Chief Rabbi Hakham Yaaqob and grandfather of our current Chief Rabbi Hakham Shaul) who ruled like the *Magen Abraham* in his book on *B’rakhot* known as *P’ri Ssadiq* (pg. 12).

To summarize there are three opinions:

- 1) According to Rabbi Yosef Sittel, *Lahm Ba'ajin* and Pizza are *M'zonot* unless you are having eight ounces or more (then you make *HaMossi*). Likewise Iraqi *Sombusak* is also *M'zonot* for less than eight ounces (eight ounces or more is *HaMossi*) according to Rabbi Sittel.
- 2) According to Hakham Yischaq Shehebar and Hakham Moshe Mizrahi pocket shaped dough filled with meat or cheese like Iraqi *Sombusak* is *M'zonot* (for less than eight ounces), but *Lahm Ba'ajin* and Pizza are *HaMossi* (for any amount) since they are not pocket shaped.
- 3) According to Hakham 'Obadyah Yosef and Hakham Shaul Kassin both pocket shaped dough filled with meat or cheese like Iraqi *Sombusak* and *Lahm Ba'ajin* and Pizza are all *HaMossi* (for any amount).

Therefore with regards to *Lahm Ba'ajin* and Pizza there is a *Safeq S'feqa L'Humra* (a double doubt to be stringent). Maybe the *Halakhah* is like the *Magen Abraham* who considers all dough baked with meat or cheese *HaMossi*, and even if the *Halakhah* is like the *Ture' Zahav* maybe he only says *M'zonot* when the dough is an actual pocket shape (like the Iraqi *Sombusak*). So one should say *HaMossi* on *Lahm Ba'ajin* or Pizza (unless the dough is mixed with enough of an added ingredient like oil, or juice or milk etc), but those who have the custom to be lenient and make *M'zonot* are relying upon the opinion of Rabbi Yosef Sittel.

Mr. Arking is a noted expert on Sephardic custom and liturgy. He teaches widely throughout the community including in Congregation Beth Torah and Bene Yosef.

COMMUNITY FOCUS: COMMUNITY SCHOOLS COLLABORATE

Mrs. Lisa Didia

A lecture featuring the world-renowned parent and teacher educator Alfie Kohn, was recently hosted by Barkai Yeshivah, Magen David Yeshivah, and the Sephardic Community Center on Tuesday, December 9, 2014. Mr. Kohn, a celebrity in his field, is known for shedding new light on commonly held beliefs on parenting and education. His thoughts encourage the listener to re-think commonly accepted ideas about raising and teaching children. He has written numerous books on parenting and education most notably, *Punished by Rewards*, *Unconditional Parenting* and *The Myth of the Spoiled Child*.

Having a guest lecturer of the caliber of Mr. Kohn was only made possible because of the collaboration between our organizations. It was with an authentic belief that our schools could be working together to bring about pervasive change that Barkai Yeshivah contacted Magen David Yeshivah to join us in hosting this event. And with great confidence in that belief did Magen David Yeshivah join in, and solicit the Sephardic Community Center.

Mr. Kohn discussed the idea of competition and the less than positive affects those have on children in both family and educational settings. He explained that competition creates success for one by having another fail.

Mr. Kohn's lecture exemplified collaboration between our Community organizations, yielding a thought-provoking evening. We look forward to this event being the start of a continued collaboration amongst our schools.

Lisa Didia holds a masters degree from Bank Street College of Education. She teaches at Barkai Yeshiva and is Head of Staff at Camp David.



Left to Right: Rabbi Alan Berkowitz, MDY Head of School, Mr. Alfie Kohn, Rabbi David Leibtag, Barkai Head of School



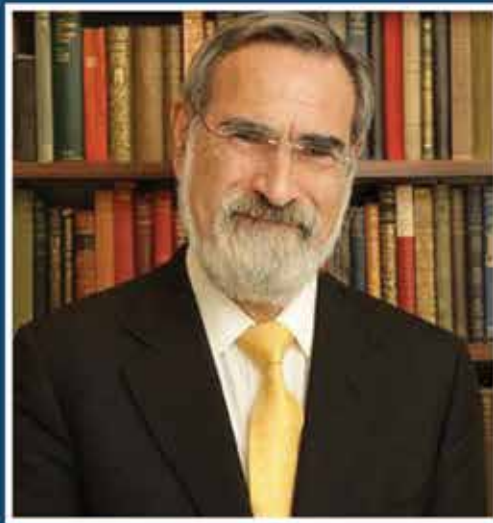
Sephardic Community Alliance Presents:

FAITH IN THE MODERN WORLD

With Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

An Enlightening Evening for Young Adults Ages 18-35

Thursday, February 26th at 7:00 pm



Center for Jewish History

15 West 16th St.

New York, NY 10011

RSVP: thescaevents@gmail.com