

SEPHARDIC COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

QOL HA'QAHAL

קול הקהל



SEPHARDIC
COMMUNITY
ALLIANCE

BUILDING OUR FUTURE
BY PRESERVING OUR PAST

Issue 20: Tish'a Be'Ab
DEDICATED BY SARI AND EDDIE DANA



Dedicated by Sari and Eddie Dana

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.

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QOL HA'QAHAL MISSION

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

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Cover Image: Roman Triumphal arch panel copy from Beth Hatefutsoth, showing spoils of Jerusalem temple.

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**SEPHARDIC
COMMUNITY
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BUILDING OUR FUTURE
BY PRESERVING OUR PAST

SUMMER 2015

LEARNING PROGRAM



@SCA_Updates

CO-ED HIGH SCHOOL CLASS

Tuesdays at 8:00pm:
Guest Rabbis
at Hathaway

CO-ED COLLEGE & YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

Thursdays at 8:30pm:
CHECK WEBSITE FOR LOCATION
7/9: Sgt. Benjamin Anthony
7/16: R. Richard Tobias
7/23 - 8/20: R. Joseph Dweck
*5 Essential Lessons from the
Rambam About Jewish Life*

WOMEN'S BRUNCH AND LEARN

11:00 - 12:15pm

Monday: Mrs. Vivien Hidary - *Insights into the Parasha*

Tuesday: R. Richard Tobias - *Laws and Explanation of Tefilla*

Wednesday: Mrs. Sara Mizrahi - *Niddah Refresher Course, 7/1-7/15*
R. Joseph Dweck - *BEGINS 7/22*

Thursday: R. Joseph Beyda - *Shelomo HaMelekh: His life and Work*

11:45am

Thursday: Mrs. Mazal Mizrahi - *Beyond Psychotherapy: Torah Psychology
and the Transcendent Self*

12:15 - 1:30pm

Monday: Mrs. Emily Labaton - *Shir HaShirim: A Love Story*

Tuesday: Mrs. Esther Hidary - *Topics in Jewish Thought*

Wednesday: R. Naftali Besser - *Growth through the Parasha, BEGINS 7/8*

6TH-8TH GRADE PROGRAM

6:30-7:30pm

Girls

Monday: Mrs. Michelle Gindi - *Lesson from the Parasha*

Tuesday: Mrs. Rayna Cohen - *Parasha and Pe'aleem Interactive Hebrew Games*

Wednesday: Mrs. Doris Cohen - *Pirke Abot and Mishle: Life Lessons*

Boys

Monday: R. Nathan Dweck - *Nevi'im, Wednesday: Mishna*

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday: R. Charles Safdieh - *Mishna*

FRIDAY NIGHT at the JCC, BEGINS 6/19

Shir HaShirim: 6:45pm

Minha: 7:00pm

SHABBAT DAY at the JCC, BEGINS 6/19

First Minyan: 6:40am

Young Adult Minyan: 9:15pm

Classes: 1 hour before minha

Minha: 45 min. before sunset

Start date: Monday, June 29

Weekday Learning Program will be at Edmond J Safra Synagogue
75 Hathaway Ave, Deal, NJ

HIGH SCHOOL & COLLEGE YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN DINNER & CLASSES

Dinner: 8:00pm, Class: 8:15pm, Arbit: 9:30pm

Young Men

Monday:

R. Harold Sutton - *Gemara*

R. Albert Setton - *Gemara*

R. Isaac Tawil - *Sefer HaMisvot*

R. Charles Safdieh - *Halakha*

R. Victor Gheriani - *Ben Adam LeHavero*

Tuesday:

R. Harold Sutton - *Gemara*

R. Albert Setton - *Gemara*

R. Isaac Tawil - *In Depth Halakha*

R. Avi Harari - *Topics in Halakha*

R. Nathan Dweck - *Halakha*

R. Joseph Dweck - *Musaf & Piyutim of High Holidays*

Wednesday:

R. Harold Sutton - *Gemara*

R. Albert Setton - *Gemara*

R. Isaac Tawil - *Parashat HaShabua*

R. Avi Harari - *Mahshevet Yisrael*

R. Charles Safdieh - *Halakha*

R. Victor Gheriani - *Gemara*

R. Richard Tobias - *HaRambam 13 Iqarim*

R. Moses Haber - *Talmud and Halakha*

R. Ike Hanon - *Pirke Abot*

Thursday:

R. Harold Sutton - *Gemara*

Young Women

Monday: R. Haber - *Ta'ame Hamissvot*

Wednesday: R. Naftali Besser - *Living Inspired, BEGINS 7/8*

R. Isaac Tawil (7:15-8:15pm)

Adults: 8:15pm - IN THE HATHAWAY ANNEX BUILDING, BEGINS 7/22

Wednesday: R. Joseph Dweck - *First 3 Perakim of Bereshit*

For the latest updates visit www.SephardicCommunityAlliance.org
For questions concerning Men's Classes contact scanightprogram@gmail.com
Womens and College programs RabbiMosesHaber@gmail.com



Tish'a Be'Ab

MOVING BEYOND TEARS

Rabbi Marc Angel

Despite the call by some to revoke the fast of Tish'a Be'Ab since the re-establishment of Jewish sovereignty, it certainly still has meaning for us today.

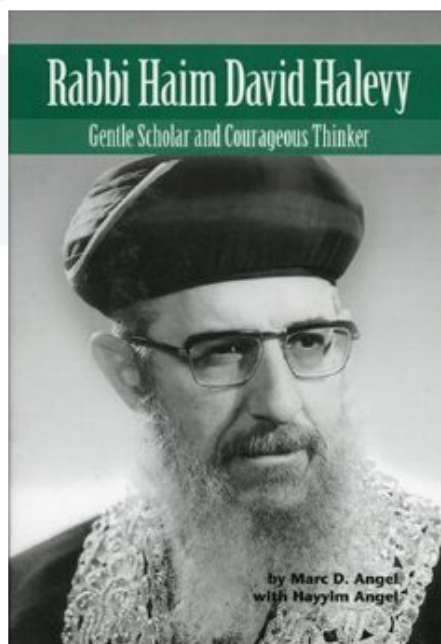
Our ancient Temples in Jerusalem were destroyed in 586 BCE and 70 CE...and we are still fasting and crying! If this made sense during our many centuries of exile, does it still make sense today? After all, we now have a vibrant and strong Jewish State of Israel. With all our problems, shouldn't we be enjoying our sovereignty and the first flowerings of redemption? Isn't it time to stop fasting and crying for an exile that has functionally come to an end?

Rabbi Haim David Halevy, late Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, addressed this issue in his volume of responsa, *Aseh Lekha Rav* 1:13, which was published in Tel Aviv in 1976. He wisely observed: "If a nation knows how to remember the days of its destructions and tragedies and fixes days for fasting and prayer, then it may be presumed that it will merit redemption. Fasting is a matter for the nation, not for God."

Tish'a Be'Ab is commemorated to arouse our national memories and our national aspirations. Even with the establishment of the State of Israel, we have a long way to go before all is well with the Jewish people. While our observance of Tish'a Be'Ab is not as bleak and somber as that of our ancestors in pre-State days, we still derive value by devoting the day to fasting and prayer, to memory of tragedies past, to dreams of redemptions yet to come.

It is a day for spiritual and national reflection.

The Talmud (Yoma 9b) suggests that the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed due to the sin of *sina't hinam*, baseless hatred. Yet, "baseless" hatred seems to be rare, if not impossible. Whenever people hate, they don't think their hatred is baseless. They hate others because of their race or religion, because they fear them or were hurt by them. The reasons for their hatred may be entirely false and unfounded—yet, in their minds it is not baseless. Indeed, it would be quite amazing to come across someone who states that he/she hates you for absolutely no reason...just for the sake of hatred!



Book by Rabbi Marc D. Angel

I believe the phrase "*sina't hinam*" should be interpreted differently. It does not mean baseless hatred. Rather, the word "*hinam*" derives from the word *הן* "*hen*"—graciousness, loveable-ness. The Temple was destroyed because people hated to see the "*hen*" in others. They dehumanized their opponents, treating them as though they lacked human charm and worth.

At the time preceding the destruction of the Second Temple, Jews were divided into hostile factions. There were zealots and pacifists, war-mongers and peaceniks, religious extremists and moderates. The groups were so antagonistic to each other, that they could not see the "*hen*" in their opponents. They stereotyped and demonized each other. This led to the fragmentation of society and to the inability to work together in a unified fashion.

When we look into each other's eyes and see a fellow human being, it is quite difficult to hate. We realize that all of us—regardless of nationality and ideology—are human beings. We love, we fear, we care for our families, we can be kind and compassionate. When we see the "*hen*" in others, our emotions steer away from hatred and toward sympathy.

Continued on page 6

Continued from page 5

Too often, people do not seriously look for the “hen” in others who are not part of their own inner circle. They dehumanize, create stereotypes...and hate to see the “hen” in those who differ from them. They do not see the individual human being with a heart and soul and feelings; instead, they see Settlers and Peace Now; ultra-Orthodox and secular; Jews and Arabs; Sephardim and Ashkenazim. Instead of talking to each other as fellow human beings, we tend to shout at each other as enemies. It is easy to hate a stereotype; it is difficult to hate a fellow human being who has “hen.”

Don't we deeply lament the fact that our enemies constantly engage in dehumanizing us, in presenting us as hateful objects rather than as fellow human beings? Don't we profoundly wish that our enemies would take the time to look into our eyes and see our “hen,” realizing that we all are

“Tish’a Be’Ab is commemorated to arouse our national memories and our national aspirations.”

created by the same God and all are endowed with grace and loving-kindness? And if we are profoundly disappointed by the hatred aimed against us, shouldn't we strive our mightiest to avoid falling into that same vicious trap of hating others? Shouldn't we try to elevate our own humanity by seeing the “hen” in our fellow Jews and in all our fellow human beings?

Tish’a Be’Ab certainly has meaning for us today. It is a day for fasting, prayer, and introspection. It is a prod to national memory. It is a reminder of past failures. It is a clarion call for a wiser, more humane and happier future. It is a challenge to overcome the pernicious sin of *sina’t hinam*, hating to see the “hen” in our fellow human beings.

It is a time for tears - and a time to move beyond tears.

Rabbi Angel is Director of the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals (jewishideas.org), Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Shearith Israel in New York City and author and editor of 30 books, most recently Maimonides: Essential Teachings in Jewish Faith and Ethics (Skylight Illuminations, 2012).

JEREMIAH'S TEMPLE SERMON

Rabbi Moshe Aziz

I. Introduction

Many people nowadays spend hours of their time thinking about what they will do to ensure that the day of Tish’a Be’Ab will pass with as little pain and discomfort as possible. Often, the plans will involve a good amount of sleep and several movies. Among the many restrictions on Tish’a Be’Ab, it is forbidden to study Torah, except for certain portions, because “the words of Torah gladden the heart.”¹ One category of acceptable Torah portions to learn on Tish’a Be’Ab are the morose portions of Jeremiah.² This article will examine one of Jeremiah's most famous prophecies, the Temple Sermon.

Jeremiah is the main prophet who prophesied about and warned of the destruction of the First Temple. He was a kohen from the city of Anatot, and his forty-year tenure as a prophet spanned from approximately 626 BCE through the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE. For most of this time, God gave Jeremiah the unpopular task of making public calls for justice and prophesying the destruction of the Temple. The Israelite establishment of the time did not want to accept him as a true prophet. At different times in the book, Jeremiah was attacked by his own brothers, beaten and put into the stocks by a priest and false prophet, imprisoned by the king, threatened with death, and thrown into a cistern by government officials. Unfortunately for us, when the dust settled, Jeremiah's message proved to be correct, and Jerusalem was left in ruins.

II. The Temple Sermon

ירמיהו פרק ז

א הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר הָיָה אֶל-יִרְמְיָהוּ, מֵאֵת ה' לֵאמֹר: ב עֲמֹד, בְּשַׁעַר בֵּית ה', וְקִרְאתָ שָׁם, אֶת-הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה; וְאָמַרְתָּ שְׁמָעוּ דְּבַר-ה', כָּל-יְהוּדָה הַבָּאִים בַּשַּׁעֲרִים הָאֵלֶּה, לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת, לָהּ:

Jeremiah Chapter 7

1 The word that came to Jeremiah from God, saying: 2 Stand in the gate of the God's house, and proclaim there this word, and say: Hear the word of God, all ye of Judah, who enter

¹ שְׂרִיעַ אֵי"ח תקנ"ה: א'

² שם

*in at these gates to worship God.*³

Jeremiah is asked here to speak at the gates of the Beit Hamiqdash. In the Israel of those times, the gates of the Temple, located in the capital of Jerusalem, was the most public thoroughfare for the Israelites. Furthermore, the Temple was a location where nobody was able to come to if they were ritually impure. Every person had to ensure that he was ritually pure in order to enter. Jeremiah's message, as we shall see, is perfect for this location. As a Jew, says God, it is not enough for you to be just be ritually pure when you enter the Beit Hamiqdash; you must also be pure in all of your actions. A Jew must embrace the Torah in its entirety,

“Many people nowadays spend hours of their time thinking about what they will do to ensure that the day of Tish'a Be'Ab will pass with as little pain and discomfort as possible. Often, the plans will involve a good amount of sleep and several movies.”

and not just the ritual aspects which relate to the Temple.

ג פה-אמר ה' צבאות, אלקי ישראל, היטיבו דרכיכם, ומעלליכם; ואשכנח אתכם, במקום הזה: ד אל-תבטחו לכם, אל-דברי השקר לאמר: היכל ה' היכל ה', היכל ה' המה:

3 Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your doings, so I will cause you to dwell in this place. 4 Trust not in the lying words, saying: 'The temple of God, the temple of God, the temple of God, are these!'

Jeremiah summarizes here the faulty argument of the Jewish establishment at that time, also known as “Zion Theology.” Proponents of “Zion Theology” believed, very simply, that God would never destroy His own house. Jerusalem and the Temple were essentially invincible and would last forever. A corollary of this belief is that there was no way any enemy could overpower the Jewish people as long as the Temple stood. “Heikhal Hashem, Heikhal Hashem,

Heikhal Hashem!” they would say. In other words: “This is the house of God—how can you as a prophet, who is supposed to be ‘religious’ and passing on the word of God, possibly be telling us it will be destroyed?”

Later in Chapter 26, Jeremiah is arrested and put on trial for proclaiming this prophecy:

ח ויהי ככלות ירמיהו, לדבר את כל-אשר-צוה ה', לדבר, אל-כל-העם; ויתפשו אותו הכהנים והנביאים, וכל-העם לאמר--מות תמות: ט מדוע נבית בשם-ה' לאמר, כשלו יהיה הבית הזה, והעיר הזאת תחרב, מאין יושב, ויקהל כל-העם אל-ירמיהו, בבית ה':

8 Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that God had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the Kohanim and the prophets and all the people laid hold on him, saying: 'You shall surely die.' 9 Why have you prophesied in the name of God, saying: 'This house shall be like Shiloh,⁴ and this city shall be desolate, without an inhabitant?' And all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.⁵

A few lines later in Chapter 7, Jeremiah presents his powerful criticism of the Israelite establishment:

ח הנה אתם בטחים לכם, על-דברי השקר--לבטחי, הועיל: ט הגב רצח ונאף, והשבע לשקר וקטר לבצל, והלה, אחרי אלהים אחרים--אשר לא-ידעתם: י ובאתם ועמדתם לפני, בבית הזה אשר נקרא-שמי עלי, ואמרתם, נצלנו למען עשות, את כל-התועבות האלה: יא המערת פרצים, היה הבית הזה אשר-נקרא-שמי עלי--בעיניכם; גם אנכי הנה ראיתי, נאם-ה':

8 Behold, you trust in lying words that have no benefit. 9 Can you steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and offer unto Baal,⁶ and walk after other gods whom you have not known, 10 and come and stand before **Me** in this house, whereupon **My** name is called, and say: 'We are saved,' so that you may [continue to] do all these abominations? 11 Has this house, whereupon **My** name is

⁴ Shiloh was the previous location of the Mishkan (Tabernacle), where the Aron Hakodesh was kept. It was a kind of precursor to the Temple. Mishkan Shiloh served for us as the Temple all the way from the times of the prophet Isaiah (See Isaiah 18:1), and according to our Sages, it stood for 369 years (Zevachim 118b).

⁵ Zion Theology was present for some time amongst the Israelites. The prophet Mikhah (about 100 years before Jeremiah) also criticized proponents of Zion Theology: "The heads judge for bribery, and the Kohanim teach for hire, and the prophets practice divination for money; yet will they lean upon God, and say: 'Is not the LORD in the midst of us? No evil shall come upon us!'" (Mikha 3:11).

⁶ Baal was a popular cult of idolatry at the time.

³ Translations are adapted from JTS 1917, found on www.mechon-mamre.org

Continued from page 7

called, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold I have seen it, says God.

Jeremiah vividly paints the deception and corruption amongst the Jewish establishment. In just a few words, he rattles off 5 out of the 10 commandments which they routinely transgress. God's house has become a den of thieves—a place where criminals find refuge. Instead of being a place that inspires holiness and purity, the Temple is being used as place that allows the corrupt to flourish. “Behold, I have seen it,” says God. I see exactly what is going on, and you are not fooling anyone but yourselves.

Jeremiah concludes:

יג ועתה, יען עשׂוֹתְכֶם אֶת-כָּל-הַמַּעֲשִׂים הָאֵלֶּה--נָאִם-ה', וְאָדַבֵּר
אֲלֵיכֶם הַשָּׁמַיִם וְדַבֵּר, וְלֹא שָׁמַעְתֶּם, וְאֶקְרָא אֲתֶכֶם, וְלֹא עֲנִיתֶם: יד
וַעֲשִׂיתִי לְבֵית אֲשֶׁר נִקְרָא-שְׁמִי עָלָיו, אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם בֹּטְחִים בּוֹ,
וְלִמְקוֹם, אֲשֶׁר-נָתַתִּי לָכֶם וְלְאֲבוֹתֵיכֶם--כִּפְאֹשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי, לְשָׁלוֹ: טו
וְהִשְׁלַכְתִּי אֶתְכֶם, מֵעַל פְּנֵי,
כִּפְאֹשֶׁר הִשְׁלַכְתִּי אֶת-כָּל-אֲחֵיכֶם,
אֶת כָּל-זֶרַע אֶפְרַיִם:

13 And now, because you have committed all these actions, says God, and I spoke unto you, speaking betimes and often, but you heard not, and I called you, but you answered not; 14 therefore will I do unto the house, whereupon My name is called, wherein you trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh.⁷ 15 And I will cast you out of My sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim.

Jeremiah records how he relayed God's message to them time after time, yet the Israelites did not want to hear it. They wanted to continue in their own path, which was not right in God's eyes. The severity of their sin, notes Jeremiah, is not just that the Jewish establishment was sinning, but that they were meanwhile also using the name of God and religion in the house “whereupon **My** named is called!” In other words, says God, not only are you committing evil, you are using My name, and my Temple, to perpetuate your wrongdoing! You deceive yourselves into thinking that you are following my Torah when you are really are not, and you deceive the

public as well. These warped values were intolerable, and unfortunately resulted in God destroying His own house. Why? Because that was the only way to stop the injustice being committed by the people.

III. Cognitive Dissonance

One of the well-established psychological phenomena studied by modern psychologists is cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance refers to the discomfort that an individual feels when he or she appears to hold two contradictory beliefs, or when an individual is confronted by new information that conflicts with existing beliefs. As a general rule, an individual experiencing cognitive dissonance will consciously or unconsciously reduce their level of psychological discomfort either by changing or rejecting one of the two contradictory “truths.”⁸

For example, if Mr. X falls in love with Ms. Y, and then finds out that Ms. Y happens to be a criminal, Mr. X will most likely experience some cognitive dissonance, since he both loves her and has found out that she is a criminal. In order to resolve the stress from his cognitive dissonance, Mr. X will most likely do one of two things: (a) reject or change his love towards Ms. Y, or (b) reject or change his thoughts on whether her criminal activity is bad.⁹

Cognitive dissonance is what strikes us any time we are reprimanded by someone, or if someone points out that we have done something wrong. In such a case, we are generally faced with one of two options: either to reject the validity of our previous actions and change those actions, or to reject the validity of whatever is pointing out the flaw to us. We might conceptualize the first process as “*teshuba*” (repentance) and the latter process as “denial.” In the times of Jeremiah, the Israelite political establishment chose the latter, thus choosing to be in denial over what God truly wanted as opposed to doing *teshuba* and changing their actions. God, through Jeremiah, attempted to point out the flaws over and

⁸ For more some more background information, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cognitive_dissonance

⁹ To be clear, the details of this case are all fabricated, and are using generalizations in order to make a point. Of course human psyche is infinitely complex. There are many different specifics when it comes to cognitive dissonance, and every case is different.

⁷ See footnote 5

over again, but the Israelites did not want to hear any of it.

Although being “God’s house,” the Temple was not a structure built for God—it was built for us, his people. As the prophet Isaiah famously said in the name of God: “The Heaven is My Throne, and the Earth is My footstool, where is the house that you can [possibly] build for me, and where is the location that can [possibly] be My resting place?”¹⁰ Being that God exists outside the space-time continuum, a physical structure like the Beit Hamiqdash certainly cannot house His Presence! The Temple, rather, was a place for us to relate to God, come close to Him, and learn how to emulate Him. Once it stopped serving its purpose, and the people instead chose corruption and self-deception, there was no reason to keep the physical structure around just to further ruin God’s name.



Our ancestors chose denial over *teshuvah*, and that resulted in the destruction of the Temple. We pray that Tish'a Be'Ab should inspire us to realize that our tragedies were our fault, and nobody else's. May we choose the path of *teshuvah* and elevate ourselves towards the pathways of God, and not fall into the traps of denial. And may God fulfill with us the verse, “Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad with her, all you who love her; rejoice for joy with her, all you who mourn for her.”¹¹

Rabbi Aziz received Semikha from Rabbi Eliyahu Ben-Haim. He has a masters degree from the Wurzweiler School of Social Work and works as a Rabbi in Great Neck.

WHAT NOW?

Rabbi Jacob Bitton

When little Joey and his daddy, Jack, went out to ice cream to celebrate Joey’s fifth birthday, Jack insisted on parking a block away from the ice cream store. “Why did you park so far?” Asked the inquisitive child. “Because the only spot next to the ice cream store said ‘no parking anytime,’” responded Jack. Joey relented, “but why didn’t we park there?” Jack replied tenderly, “because if we park there, the cop will give daddy a fine.” Still a full half-a-block away from the ice cream store, Joey looked up at his daddy: “and why don’t you want a fine?” Jack, a bit more impatient, responded, “because I would need to pay money.” “And why don’t you want to pay money?” Jack frowned and said “because. Because I don’t want to. Now, do you want ice cream or not?”

As we commemorate the most tragic event in the national history of ‘Am Yisrael, Tish'a Be'Ab, a question that tends to become very popular is “why?” Our homeland was destroyed. Twice! This was the collapse of our civilization and the beginning of centuries of persecutions. Our first instinct is to want answers. Why did God let this happen? Why did this happen to us? Why us? Why then? Why, oh why, God?

Curiously, it is impossible to ask these questions in Hebrew. Technically.

The words that normally translate “why”—**Lamma** (למה = to what [end]), **Maddua**’ (מדוע = Man + Dua’ = who knows), **Al Ma** (על מה = on account of what)—all are missing a little humph. They allow us to ask for some sense in a sequence of events. If a bush is on fire but not burning, I can ask “*maddua*,” inviting theories to explain the process that ended with the burning bush that is not consumed. But I will never quite be able to ask for the cause of the event. Not in Hebrew. Likewise, the words used to translate “because,” the answer invoked by the question “why,” come up short: **Ki** (כי = as), **Al** (על = on account), **Biglal** (בגלל = as a development of), **Le-** (ל = in order to)—all fail to indicate that something is the cause asked for. This is not an accidental technicality. It is a symptom of a fundamental difference between the way ‘Am Yisrael and Western Society perceive reality. You can only ask “why,” and answer “because,” when what you are looking for is a logical sequence, a syllogism of

¹⁰ Isaiah 66:1

¹¹ Isaiah 66:10

Continued on page 10

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if A, then B. In Hebrew, we never expect to find necessary causality other than in textbooks of logic.

For most modern cultures, the world is a chain of events caused by one another: necessarily, mechanically and predictably. Most men seek to process the world through a strict theory of causality. The first thing that seems to obsess the modern world after a calamity is “who was at fault.” Somehow, finding the culprit, the cause, of a disaster will make it all be Ok, because we know the “truth.” In contrast, the Jewish People doesn’t look for mechanical causes. Yes, we encourage introspection, and, when a tragedy befalls us, we look at what can be learned and improved. But, if after the Horban the Rabbis claimed that we had engaged in *sinat hinnam*, this was not so that we “blame” the causes in the past for the present. Rather, this is a statement for the future. It is as if they were saying: “something bad happened, and we have an opportunity right now to convert this tragedy into something meaningful, if we allow it to trigger within us a motivation to improve.”

For the Hebrew-minded, events may be related to one another, but there is always an element of unpredictability, of choice, of freedom. Languages reflect this difference in perception. A Jew does not ask “why,” we plainly lack the words to do so. Words matter, and they tell a story of the group that uses them.

The causality of the “why” and “because” doesn’t always work (it actually never works all the time). The current theories of physics suggest that, unlike the world of Aristotle, the universe is predictable only as a function of statistics. When physical phenomena is analyzed piece-by-piece, when we look at each sub-particle making the cosmos and how it behaves, we find that all we can really predict is a probability: ninety per cent (or any other number) of times A will happen, and the other ten per cent the result will be B. Taken wholesale, the universe becomes more predictable, because the probability that B will happen in any noticeable or relevant scale grows increasingly smaller as we look at increasingly large sections of the universe. But, strictly speaking, there is no causality in the universe. Call it randomness or divine intervention, modern science is unanimous in that the

universe is not a perfectly predictable machine. There is always an element of possibility: an openness for a choice to be made. The question of “why” and the answer of “because” is not entirely appropriate. You cannot ask: “why is this electron here?” The answer “Because...” would be misleading. It would only be true most of the times, but never always.

Disciplines such as psychology came about to make sense of reality by applying the non-Jewish theory of strict causality. Its aim is to discover the causes of human behavior. Why is this individual acting this way? Because of this and this. The underlying premise of the field is that human conduct is mechanic. There is no choice. There is why and there is because. Of course, this attitude also allows for the creation of excuses. A serial murderer acts a certain way because of some tragic events in his or her history. An adulterer is caused to take a certain path because of an uncontrollable need to satiate some obscure Freudian fixation. Research will focus on identifying causes; on answering the “why” question. Why is this person an alcoholic? Because he has a certain gene that

we just discovered. Asking the question of “why” in human affairs is far more consequential than asking it in physics. Seeing, like the Greeks, the universe as a predictable machine that journeys through a never-

changing causal chain just means that the universe is less interesting and the Prime Mover behind it less intelligent (and less free). With human behavior, however, causality means a lack of freedom. “Don’t bother trying to change” is often the echo that remains after a psychology lesson. It means a lack of accountability (it is never anyone’s “fault”) and it means a lack of responsibility. The “why” and the “because” of human affairs teach that things just “are,” and human experience is but an incidental consequence of a causal chain extending way beyond the reach of our choices.

Beyond physics and psychology, non-Jewish societies (modern and pagan alike) perceive the divine as a force bereft of any will and choice. (A word about the “divinity” of the secular world: try substituting the term “Mother Nature” or “Natural Selection” or “Randomness” for “the Prime Mover” and you obtain a deity as divine as the God of Aristotle and of Spinoza.) There is no Creation. Things are, and always have been, a certain way. A necessary way. One thing inevitably

***“Our first instinct is to want answers.
Why did God let this happen? Why did
this happen to us? Why us? Why then?
Why, oh why, God?”***

leads to another. Predictably. Also in worship, idolaters believe that their god has rules he must follow (if A, then B). If I dance, then it must rain. If I bring a sacrifice, then I must win the war. If I behave nicely to my friends, then the gods will behave nicely to me; and if I am naughty, bad things will happen. By extension, non-Jewish theology infers the reverse (B, therefore A): If I am successful, I must have done something to please the gods. If I suffer, I must have done something to offend them. All of these relationships are discovered by the “why” question and answered with a “because.” “Iyob, you want to know why you suffer?” asked his non-Jewish (Edomite) friends. “Because you were not righteous in the eyes of God.” God’s response? He prescribes to these friends an atonement offering.

Asking the “why” question about God is not a thing a Jew does (as we mentioned, it is impossible to do in Hebrew). It implies that God is unintelligent, and acts because of “reasons.” That God has no freedom of choice and is rather confined to the rules that we make up in our image (and oftentimes tempered with lots of wishful thinking). Most troubling, it implies that we can manipulate Him. To be precise, it implies that some of us have access to the secret of what are the reasons for God’s actions. “God gets mad when you do this, but I know the secret of how to fix it, just say this magic formula at this auspicious time.” Or “you can make God terribly happy by doing this.” Usually, these “secrets” are accessible only to those who are most skilled in the art of manipulation or who have the greatest ability to force their will upon others. After all, this is the kind of person that can persuade you (or threaten you to believe) that they know the mind of God. (Much like Bilaam, who proclaimed that he “knew the mind of God,” and who also was famous for his curses!)

The result? A pyramidal society where everybody is effectively enslaved to those who are superior, and where those who are superior end up enslaved to their own delusions. In the same vein, a Jew should not arrogate to himself the “because” answer. No, the inquisition did not happen because of this or that. Jews have rejected such a society ever since feeling in our own flesh where this society leads to, in Egyptian bondage. It is no surprise that we don’t have a word for “why.”

In addition to denying choice, intelligence, options, responsibility, accountability and purpose, asking the “why” question is, simply put, a horrid waste of precious time and efforts. Even if the universe were in fact a system of causality, the most one can seek to achieve by asking “why” is discovering the “truth” about the past. Being inscribed in the annals of history as one of those who discovered historical truth and contributed absolutely zero to the present or the future should not be very appealing.

Little children, like Joey, think that the world around them is a compilation of “whys” and “because.” They don’t believe in choices, so every “why” question invites a “because” answer, which (as any parent knows) invites yet another “why” question, ad nauseum. Less-developed civilizations, or those who did not have the privilege of our history and of being enlightened by Bore ‘Olam, also see the world around them as a compilation of “whys” and “because.” Jews do not.



The alternative to “why” and “because” is found in the masterful work by the prophet Yirmeyahu, which we read on Tish’a Be’Ab, Eikha. Not “why” but “how.” We want to understand how Yerushalayim deteriorated to the point it did. We want to look at what happened, not as a quest for the “truth” of what caused the destruction, but as a blueprint for mistakes we don’t want to repeat. You will

not find Yirmeyahu claiming that the reason God destroyed Yerushalayim was because people spoke in the middle of tefilla. We mourn and lament what happened, but we move on. Our intellectual abilities are not wasted in finding a reason as scapegoat. We address tragedy prospectively, not retrospectively. We are concerned with the future. Now, that this happened, what? How do we get ourselves out of this mess? How do we learn the lesson?

Instead of being caught in the past and in the unanswerable question of causality, we look forward.

This Tish’a Be’Ab, don’t ask why. Ask how. Ask what now.

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Sephardic Customs

CUSTOMS OF TISH'A BE'AB

Mr. Morris Arking

Tefillin

There is a difference of opinion among the Rishonim about whether the morning of Tish'a Be'Ab is comparable to the first day of mourning (for a close relative) when it is not permitted to wear *tefillin* (if the passing and burial occurred on the same day), or the subsequent days of mourning when mourners are obligated to wear *tefillin*. According to the Ra"ABaD it is forbidden to wear *tefillin* on Tish'a Be'Ab. The Ma"HaRam MeRotenburgh also considered it like the first day of mourning and did not wear a *talet gadol* or *tefillin* until *minha*. The custom of not wearing *tefillin* in shahrit of Tish'a Be'Ab is also found in the Shibbole' HaLeqet, the Roqeah, the Meiri and the Sa"MaG. HaRambam wrote that some hakhamim refrained from wearing the *tefillin* shel rosh on Tish'a Be'Ab (Hilkhot Ta'anivot 5:11).



However other authorities require *tefillin* on Tish'a Be'Ab. Since the tragedies occurred centuries earlier they do not consider it more stringent than the second day of mourning for a relative. (Those that do, consider an annual national day of mourning more stringent than the second day of personal mourning.) Those authorities include many Geonim, the Ramban, the R"ITBA, the Ra"N and the Nimuqe' Yosef. Maran Yosef Caro in Shulhan 'Arukh ruled that one is obligated to wear *tefillin* on Tish'a Be'Ab (OH 38:6), but that he could fulfill that obligation in *minha*. Therefore he writes that it is customary to only wear a *talet qatan* in the morning, and a *talet gadol* and *tefillin* in *minha* on Tish'a Be'Ab (OH 555:1).

Although the general rule is to follow the ruling of Maran in Shulhan 'Arukh, with regards to *tefillin* on Tish'a Be'Ab many middle-eastern communities developed different customs. The gemara in Masekhet Berakhot (14b) stated in the name

of 'Ula: "Anyone who reads the shema' without *tefillin* is like giving a false testimony about himself." Therefore R' Moshe Galante (17th century Jerusalem) wore *tefillin* at home to read the shema' while he was wearing them, and then came to pray with the congregation without *talet* and *tefillin*. This became the custom in Baghdad (Gedulot Elisha 555:1, Ben Ish Hai Debarim 25). Yet other authorities considered the 'amidah with *tefillin* to be more important than *tefilah b'sibbur* (prayer with a minyan) and advocated praying with *tefillin* at home from the beginning of the prayers until after the 'amidah and then coming to the synagogue for qinot, sefer Torah, Ekah and the end of the prayers. This is based on the gemara in Berakhot (15a): One who wants to accept upon himself the complete yoke of heaven should wear *tefillin* and read the shema' and pray. Maran brought this as the halakhah

in OH 25:4. We find this custom written by Rabbi Hayyim Palaji (19th century Turkey) in Ruah Hayyim (555) and Mo'ed L'Kol Hai (10:60). And in the Siddur Bet 'Obed (*Tefillin* 13) as the custom in the Land of Israel. This was also the custom of many in Djerba (B'rit Kehunah Tish'a Be'Ab 12). In Halab the majority prayed at home with *tefillin* until after the 'amidah, but some only said *qadesh li* and *qeriat shema'* with *tefillin* at home, and then prayed in the synagogue without *talet* and *tefillin*. No one wore *talet* and *tefillin* in the Synagogue on the morning of Tish'a Be'Ab (Derekh Eress quoting Hakham Yisshaq Tawil).

Still, some Middle-Eastern communities did wear *talet* and *tefillin* in the synagogue on the morning of Tish'a Be'Ab. This was the custom of the Qabbalistic synagogue Bet El in Jerusalem as well as some other synagogues in Jerusalem. This was also the custom in Salonica and Izmir and was adopted in Hebron as well. Eventually the custom became more popular in Jerusalem and was also advocated for by Hakham 'Obadyah Yosef A"H (Hazon 'Obadyah: Arba' Ta'anivot pg 366).

In our community many still have the custom of praying at home until the end of the 'amidah with *talet* and *tefillin* or wearing *talet* and *tefillin* at home for *qadesh li* and *qeriat*

shema'. But some have adopted the custom of wearing talet and *tefillin* in the synagogue on the morning of Tish'a Be'Ab. The original custom of our ancestors in Halab was not to wear talet and *tefillin* in the synagogue until minha and it is proper to maintain our original custom.

Sitting on the Floor

In Aleppo it was customary to sit on the floor in the synagogue on thin mats (Derekh Eress).

Qaddish Titqabbal

The custom of our community is not to recite "*Titqabal*" in 'arbit of Tish'a Be'Ab. This is based on what Hakham Matloub 'Abadi wrote in Magen Ba'adi (14:3). However according to several other sources *Titqabal* was recited in 'arbit of Tish'a Be'Ab (Shulhan HaMelekh- Rabbi Shemuel Laniado 1804, Hakham Selim Za'afarani in his Customs of the Great Synagogue of Aleppo [first half of the 20th century], Hakham Yisshaq Shehebar [20th century]).

She'Assah Li Kol Sorki

The custom of Halab is to omit this *berakhah* both on Tish'a Be'Ab and Yom Kippur in accordance with the opinion of the ARI"ZaL (Derekh Eress quoting Hakham Yisshaq Shehebar).

Az Yashir

On Tish'a Be'Ab HaAzinu is recited instead of Az Yashir (Hakham Selim Za'afarani in his Customs of the Great Synagogue of Aleppo).

'Anenu

Some also said 'anenu in 'arbit on Tish'a Be'Ab, others did not (Derekh Eress).

Nahem

The prevalent custom in Halab was only to add "*Nahem*" in minha (Derekh Eress). This is based on Maran in the Bet Yosef (557) where he wrote that only saying it in minha was the "*minhag ha'olam*" in his time. This was also the custom in Baghdad (Gedulot Elisha' - 557 pg 17 [4])

Sim Shalom

In 'arbit and shahrit the original custom was to replace the paragraph of "Sim Shalom" with the shorter '*oseh hashalom* that is found in the Siddur Arba'Ta'aniyot (Shulhan HaMelekh). But later the custom changed to say Sim Shalom (Magen Ba'adi pg 84)

Naqdishakh

The custom of Halab was to recite the *nosah* (version) of "*Neqadesh Et Shimkhah...*" instead of "*Naqdishakh...*" in shahrit of Tish'a Be'Ab as found in the Siddur Arba'Ta'aniyot (Derekh Eress quoting Hakham Sadeh Harari and Hakham Yisshaq Za'afarani).

Kohanim

"Kohanim" was not recited in shahrit, only in minha (Shulhan HaMelekh). This is based on the Abudarham and Shible' HaLeqet. Similarly our custom is that a Kohen does not make "Kohanim" during his seven day mourning period for a relative.

Minha

On Tish'a Be'Ab we do not recite the haftarah in minha (Mahzor Aram Soba-1527, Rabbi Selim Za'afarani in his Customs of the Great Synagogue of Aleppo, Magen Ba'adi pg 80, Hakham Yisshaq Shehebar).

After the Fast

Most broke the fast with a meat meal since refraining from meat after Tish'a Be'Ab is only a stringency. This is based on the fact that Maran uses the language "*Minhag Kasher*" with regards to not eating meat after Tish'a Be'Ab (OH 558:1 also see the Ben Ish Hai Debarim 15). However the Rabbis and their students did not eat meat until the following evening (the night of the 11th of Ab). But when the fast was pushed to Sunday they would eat meat the following day, Monday (Derekh Eress quoting Hakham Yisshaq Tawil and Hakham Abraham Za'afarani A"H)

Mr. Arking is an expert on Sephardic customs and is a regular contributor to Qol Ha'Qahal.

THE FAST IS OVER, WHAT CAN I EAT?

Mr. Joseph Mosseri

Tish'a Be'Ab is the most mournful day of the Jewish year, everyone is sad, everyone is fasting. At the same time, meals are being prepared at home and all are looking forward to that moment when the fast ends and all can eat. So what's for dinner?

Is that really a question? Doesn't everyone break every fast with dairy?

Then again everything we do is governed is some way or another by halakhah (law) or minhag (custom) and, as such, there must be something on the books regarding this as well.

We turn to our trusty Shulhan 'Arukh (Orah Haim 558:1) and what do you think Maran, Rabbi Yosef Karo says?

"On Tish'a Be'Ab, towards the evening the sanctuary caught fire and burned, until sunset on the tenth. Due to this fact, it is a proper custom not to eat meat and not to drink wine on the night of the 10th of Ab as well as the day of the 10th of Ab."

Mooram Rabbi Moshe Isserlis adds his glosses (which are generally Ashkenazi practices) and says: "There are those who are strict until midday on the 10th of Ab but no later than that." Then he adds "If the fast of Tish'a Be'Ab is pushed off from Saturday to Sunday, it is permissible to eat meat and drink wine on Monday, but not on Sunday night, as at that point it is still forbidden due to the mourning that took place during the day."

Most people today would read this without any further thought or investigation - no meat or wine on the night after the fast. It seems as if Sepharadim and Ashkenazim are in agreement on this. Besides, I'm looking forward to my samboosak and twisted cheese.

Inconsistency in Shulhan 'Arukh

If we go back to Orah Haim 551:9, Maran writes as follows:

"There are those who have the custom not to eat meat and not to drink wine during the week of the fast, and there are those who add and they abstain from Rosh Hodesh until the fast, and there are those who extend all the way back to the seventeenth of Tamuz."

Mooram adds: "And we hideaway the slaughtering knife from Rosh Hodesh, because we do not slaughter unless there is a need for the purpose of a misvah. For example: A sick person, or for Shabbat, or a Berit Milah, or a Pidyon HaBen or any other similar case."

So clearly the rabbis here are informing us of three very clear customs regarding the consumption of meat.

1. Those who abstain from meat for all three weeks.

2. Those who abstain from meat for the nine days.

3. Those who abstain from meat only during the week of Tish'a Be'Ab.

In contrast to Orah Haim 558:1, quoted above, Maran

makes no mention of any group of people who have the custom of abstaining from eating meat on the 10th of Ab.

Clarification and Customs

Clearly, abstaining from meat after the fast was never a law or the custom of the masses. The rabbis recommended it as a proper custom but no one said it is obligatory. That being the case, why do most observant Jews today, no matter where they see themselves on the religious rainbow, say it is forbidden to eat meat after the fast? I therefore decided to check the books. Not just any books but the books the old timers used when I was a child. What I found will surprise and shock you!

There were many of these special books for fast days. They were titled Hamesh Ta'aniyot, Arba' Ta'aniyot, Qol Hashem Tehinah, Bet Ab, etc..., They were printed in **Amsterdam, Netherlands**, in **Livorno, Italy**, and in **Vienna, Austria** and they were all essentially the same, compendiums of prayers and laws pertaining to the fasts. In my collection I have many of these books ranging from the years 1728-1948. Regarding our

"...our authentic custom of eating meat after the fast is very ancient and it has been sanctioned by generations of geonim, rabbanim, and hakhamim."

question at hand, they all state the very same thing: “And the custom is neither to slaughter nor to prepare food for the post fast meal until after midday [of Tish’a Be’Ab].” These were the books used by all Sephardic communities the world over. What they said was very clear: we know you need to slaughter so you can have fresh poultry, beef, and lamb to eat to break the fast, just wait until after midday of the fast to start doing this. Keep in mind these books, the people who wrote them, the people who used them, all predated the days of refrigeration. So yes, the slaughtering was being done to have fresh food to break the fast.

Old Sources

Although I knew this was all true and correct, I decided I must search further back and find some concrete evidence and thank God I found evidence from 1000 years ago. Our great sage and rabbi Rab Haaye Gaon (939-1038 Iraq) responded to a question on this topic and his response is recorded in MeAh She’arim (“Hilkhoh Tish’a Be’Ab” page 30) by Rabbi Yisshaq Ben Geeyyat (1038-1089 **Southern Spain**). He says “In these places, since we do not eat meat from Rosh Hodesh until the Fast, there is no reason for the slaughterers to slaughter. But on the day of the fast from midday on, the slaughterers go to the slaughter house to begin their work so the people can have their meat, etc...”

Rabbi Shelomo ben Natan Sijilmasi who lived more than 875 years ago (**Sijilmasa, Morocco**) tells us in his siddur on page 105 about Rab Haaye Gaon and the custom in Iraq to slaughter and sell meat after midday.

Rabbi Yishmael HaKohen Tanooji (16th century **Cairo**) also tells us in his Sefer Hazikaron that the custom is to slaughter after midday. And the list goes on and on.

New Sources

If that’s not enough, I checked the books of laws and customs that deal specifically with our communities in the last hundred or so years, and the answer seems to be the same throughout. The people broke the fast with chicken and beef.

In **Aleppo, Syria** we have the testimony of Hakham Yisshaq Tawil (his father was Chief Rabbi of Halab, Hakham Moshe Tawil [1896-1977]) who says that the custom was to slaughter after midday and meat was eaten after the fast. However, there were rabbis who were stringent upon themselves and abstained until midday of the 10th of Ab (Derekh Eress page 94). Rabbi Abraham Zafrani (1920-2004) said not only were there stringent rabbis but there were also a few families that were stringent and they waited not just until midday on the 10th, they waited until the end of the 10th of Ab at night (Derekh Eress page 174).

I also have oral testimony that Hakham Ezra Mishanieh (1903-1985) in **Brooklyn** who broke the fast on meat as did most everyone else until the late 1950’s / early 1960’s. That’s when they started to pick up on the Ashkenaz custom of breaking the fast with bagels and cheese.



In **Damascus, Syria** the custom was also to start slaughtering after midday and break the fast on meat (Masa Dameseq page 34). Not only that, but if a man was engaged, his fiancé would be invited over for a lavish meat feast after the fast.

In **Cairo, Egypt** the custom as recorded by Chief Rabbi Refael Aharon Ben Shim’on (1848-1928) was to eat chicken and beef after the fast (Nehar Missrayim, “Hilkhoh Tish’a Be’Ab: simmanim 8, 9, 10).

In **Baghdad, Iraq** the great kabbalist Rabbi Yosef Haim (1835-1909), commonly known as the “Ben Ish Hai,” also tells us they slaughtered animals after midday and they ate meat to break the fast (Ben Ish Hai, “Debarim A,” halakhah 15}).

Among the **Turkish** Judeo-Spanish speaking Jews, they break the fast with a special meat and vegetable soup.

I recently heard that among those individuals or families that were stringent in **Aleppo, Syria** and in **Beirut, Lebanon**, many changed their practice and dropped the stringency after the creation of the State of Israel. They no longer saw it fit to uphold this extra level of mourning in light of the modern day miracle of a new Jewish state.

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Sephardic History

EXPULSION OF JEWS FROM SPAIN IN 1492

The following account gives a detailed and accurate picture of the expulsion and its immediate consequences for Spanish Jewry. The Expulsion from Spain occurred on ereb Tish'a Be'Ab 1492; 523 year ago. This account was written in Hebrew by an Italian Jew in April or May, 1495.¹

In the spring of 1492, shortly after the Moors were driven out of Granada, Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain expelled all the Jews from their lands and thus, by a stroke of the pen, put an end to the largest and most distinguished Jewish settlement in Europe. The expulsion of this intelligent, cultured, and industrious class was prompted only in part by the greed of the king and the intensified nationalism of the people who had just brought the crusade against the Muslim Moors to a glorious close. The real motive was the religious zeal of the Church, the Queen, and the masses. The official reason given for driving out the Jews was that they encouraged the Marranos to persist in their Jewishness and thus would not allow them to become good Christians.

"And in the year 5252 [1492], in the days of King Ferdinand, the Lord visited the remnant of his people a second time [the first Spanish visitation was in 1391], and exiled them. After the King had captured the city of Granada from the Moors, and it had surrendered to him on the 7th of January of the year just mentioned, he ordered the expulsion of all the Jews in all parts of his kingdom-in the kingdoms of Castile, Catalonia, Aragon, Galicia, Majorca, Minorca, the Basque provinces, the islands of Sardinia and Sicily, and the kingdom of Valencia. Even before that the Queen had expelled them from the kingdom of Andalusia [in 1483].

¹ Jacob Marcus, *The Jew in the Medieval World: A Sourcebook, 315-1791*, (New York: JPS, 1938), 51-55

The King gave them three months' time in which to leave. It was announced in public in every city on the first of May, which happened to be the 19th day of the Omer, and the term ended on the day before the 9th of Ab.²

About their number there is no agreement, but, after many inquiries, I found that the most generally accepted estimate is 50,000 families, or, as others say, 53,000.³ They had houses, fields, vineyards, and cattle, and most of them were artisans. At that time there existed many [Talmudic] academies in Spain, and at the head of the greatest of them were Rabbi Isaac Aboab in Guadalajara [probably the greatest Spanish rabbi of his day], Rabbi Isaac Veçudó in Leon, and Rabbi Jacob Habib in Salamanca [later author of a famous collection of the non-legal parts of the Talmud, the *En Yaakob*]. In the last

named city there was a great expert in mathematics, and whenever there was any doubt on mathematical questions in the Christian academy of that city they referred them to him.

His name was Abraham Zacuto. [This famous astronomer encouraged the expedition of Vasco da Gama.]...

In the course of the three months' respite granted them they endeavored to effect an arrangement permitting them to stay on in the country, and they felt confident of success. Their representatives were the rabbi, Don Abraham Seneor, the leader of the Spanish congregations, who was attended by a retinue on thirty mules, and Rabbi Meir Melamed, who was secretary to the King, and Don Isaac Abravanel [1437-1508], who had fled to Castile from the King of Portugal, and then occupied an equally prominent position at the Spanish royal court. He, too, was later expelled, went to Naples, and was highly esteemed by the King of Naples. The aforementioned great rabbi, Rabbi Isaac of Leon, used to call this Don Abraham Seneor: "Soné Or" ["Hater of Light," a Hebrew pun on Seneor], because he was a heretic, and the end proved

² The forty-nine days between the second of Passover and Shabuot are called Omer days. The actual decree of expulsion was signed March 31 and announced the first of May, the 19th day of the Omer. The Jews were to leave during in May, June, and July and be out of the country by August 1, the 8th of Ab.

³ This would be about 250,000 persons. Other estimates run from 100,000 to 800,000.

that he was right, as he was converted to Christianity at the age of eighty, he and all his family, and Rabbi Meir Melamed with him.⁴ Don Abraham had arranged the nuptials between the King and the Queen. The Queen was the heiress to the throne, and the King one of the Spanish nobility. On account of this, Don Abraham was appointed leader of the Jews, but not with their consent.

The agreement permitting them to remain in the country on the payment of a large sum of money was almost completed when it was frustrated by the interference of a prior who was called the Prior of Santa Cruz.⁵ Then the Queen gave an answer to the representatives of the Jews, similar to the saying of King Solomon [Proverbs 21:1]: "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water. God turneth it withersoever He will." She said furthermore: "Do you believe that this comes upon you from us? The Lord hath put this thing into the heart of the king." [Isabella says it is God's will that the Jews be expelled.]

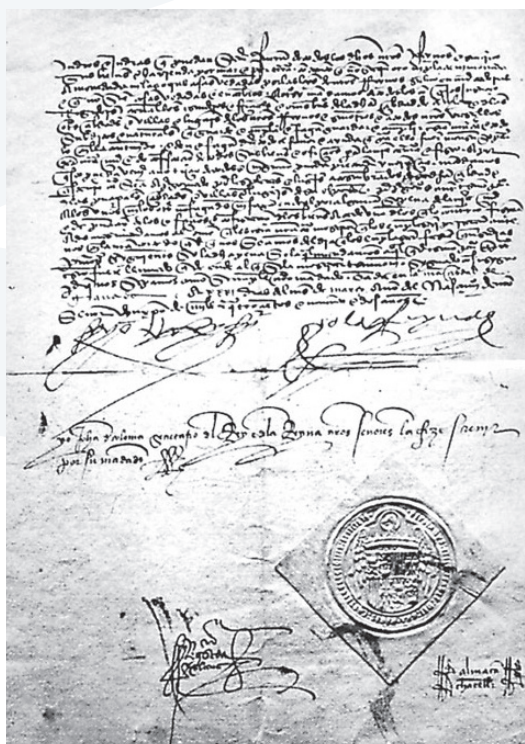
Then they saw that there was evil determined against them by the King, and they gave up the hope of remaining. But the time had become short, and they had to hasten their exodus from Spain. They sold their houses, their landed estates, and their cattle for very small prices, to save themselves. The King did not allow them to carry silver and gold out of his country, so that they were compelled to exchange their silver and gold for merchandise of cloths and skins and other things.⁶

One hundred and twenty thousand of them went to Portugal, according to a compact which a prominent man, Don Vidal bar Benveniste del Cavalleria, had made with the

King of Portugal, and they paid one ducat for every soul, and the fourth part of all the merchandise they had carried thither; and he allowed them to stay in his country six months. This King acted much worse toward them than the King of Spain, and after the six months had elapsed he made slaves of all those that remained in his country, and banished seven hundred children to a remote island to settle it, and all of them died. Some say that there were double as many. Upon them the Scriptural word was fulfilled [Deuteronomy 28:32]: "Thy sons and thy daughters shall be given unto another people, etc."⁷ He also ordered the congregation of Lisbon, his capital, not to raise their voice in their prayers, that the Lord might not hear their complaining about the violence that was done unto them.

Many of the exiled Spaniards went to Mohammedan countries, to Fez, Tlemcen, and the Berber provinces, under the King of Tunis.⁸ On account of their large numbers, the Moors did not allow them into their cities, and many of them died in the fields from hunger, thirst, and lack of everything. The lions and bears, which are numerous in this country, killed some of them while they lay starving outside of the cities. A Jew in the kingdom of Tlemcen, named Abraham, the viceroy who ruled the kingdom, made part of them come to this kingdom, and he spent a large amount of money to help them. The

Jews of Northern Africa were very charitable toward them. A part of those who went to Northern Africa, as they found no rest and no place that would receive them, returned to Spain, and became converts, and through them the prophecy of Jeremiah was fulfilled [Lamentations 1:13]: "He hath spread a net for my feet, he hath turned me back." For, originally, they had all fled for the sake of the unity of God; only a very few had become converts throughout all the boundaries of Spain; they did not spare their fortunes; yea, parents escaped



Alhambra Decree ordering the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, 1492

⁴ Seneor and his son-in-law, Meir, were converted June 15, 1492; Ferdinand and Isabella were among the sponsors.

⁵ Legend relates that Torquemada, Prior of the convent of Santa Cruz, thundered, with crucifix aloft, to the King and Queen: "Judas Iscariot sold his master for thirty pieces of silver. Your Highness would sell him anew for thirty thousand. Here he is, take him, and barter him away."

⁶ Ever since 1480 Jews and Gentiles were forbidden to export precious metal, the source of a nation's wealth.

⁷ All Spanish Jews, who were still in Portugal in 1493, were enslaved by King John (1481-1495). The children were sent to the isle of St. Thomas, off the coast of Africa.

⁸ These North African lands are across the Mediterranean from Spain.

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without having regard to their children.

When the edict of expulsion became known in the other countries, vessels came from Genoa to the Spanish harbors to carry away the Jews. The crews of these vessels, too, acted maliciously and meanly toward the Jews, robbed them, and delivered some of them to the famous pirate of that time who was called the Corsair of Genoa. To those who escaped and arrived at Genoa the people of the city showed themselves merciless, and oppressed and robbed them, and the cruelty of their wicked hearts went so far that they took the infants from the mothers' breasts.

Many ships with Jews, especially from Sicily, went to the city of Naples on the coast. The King of this country was friendly to the Jews, received them all, and was merciful towards them, and he helped them with money. The Jews that were at Naples supplied them with food as much as they could, and sent around to the other parts of Italy to collect money to sustain them. The Marranos in this city lent them money on pledges without interest; even the Dominican Brotherhood acted mercifully toward them.⁹ On account of their very large number, all this was not enough. Some of them died by famine, others sold their children to Christians to sustain their life. Finally, a plague broke out among them, spread to Naples, and very many of them died, so that the living wearied of burying the dead.

Part of the exiled Spaniards went over sea to Turkey. Some of them were thrown into the sea and drowned, but those who arrived, there the King of Turkey received kindly, as they were artisans. He lent them money and settled many of them on an island, and gave them fields and estates.¹⁰

A few of the exiles were dispersed in the countries of Italy, in the city of Ferrara, in the [papal] countries of Romagna, the March, and Patrimonium, and in Rome...

He who said unto His world, Enough, may He also say Enough unto our sufferings, and may He look down upon our impotence. May He turn again, and have compassion upon us, and hasten out salvation. Thus may it be Thy will!

⁹ The Dominican monks were normally bitterly opposed to Jews.

¹⁰ The Turks needed smiths and makers of munitions for the war against Christian Europe.

PART VIII: THE RISE OF ZIONISM THROUGH WORLD WAR II

Mrs. Natalie Mizrahi

Turning our attention to a different stage, throughout the late 19th century Eastern European Ashkenazim were in severe crisis. The flight of the unimagined numbers of Jewish immigrants whom Emma Lazarus and Sabato Morais encountered (Part VII) were mere drops in the bucket compared to the masses to come. Back in the 11th century only 3% of the Jewish population was "Ashkenaz." In 1931 they would be numbered as 97% of world Jewry.¹ The masses of desperate Russian and Ukrainian fleeing government sponsored attacks were not always graciously welcome in the modern, industrial West; not by secular society and not by gentrified Germanic or Sephardic communities. Where to settle the refugees was a looming problem.

"Back in the 11th century only 3% of the Jewish population was 'Ashkenaz'. In 1931 they would be numbered as 97% of world Jewry."

Theodore Herzl was a Viennese reporter who saw his faith in secular society crumble during the infamous Dreyfus Affair of 1894. French Jews were supposed to have been fully emancipated, yet here was this young French patriot, Artillery Captain Alfred Dreyfus, brought up on espionage charges with virtually no evidence. While the courts debated, a media circus released a diatribe of anti-Semitic literature. The supposed eradication of ancient prejudice had not materialized. If the populace hated an assimilated Jew of Dreyfus' stature, then what of the traditional shtetl dwellers seeking refuge? Anti-Semitism, Herzl realized, would never be eradicated in Old Europe despite it being an era of multi-denominational, self-effacing Judaism across the continent.

Herzl convened the first Zionist Congress in 1897 in Basel, Switzerland where the drafted goal was the emancipation of Eastern European Jewry in its own established Homeland. The Jewish State could be an egalitarian replica of a modern

¹ Cole, Peter, *The Dream of the Poem: Hebrew Poetry from Muslim and Christian Spain 920-1492* Princeton University Press, 2007.

European State like Vienna, for instance, thus proving to the nations of the world what enlightened Jews were capable of.

Unenlightened Jews were not a part of the plan. "Israel could have become an exemplary State" wrote Amos Oz unabashedly as late as July 11, 1982, in *The New York Times Magazine*, article "Has Israel Altered It's Vision?" "But for the mass immigration of Holocaust survivors, Middle Eastern Jews and non- socialists...horrible, conservative, Puritan, observant extremely hierarchal and family oriented and some extent chauvinistic, militaristic and xenophobic..."

The impression early Zionists had of Middle Eastern Jews was based on accounts penned by outsiders who traveled to the Ottoman Empire in prior times and took note. In countries like Yemen where they were the only minority group, the Jewish community was subject to forced labor. In Morocco they had to go about barefoot. In Tunis they could not carry a lantern at night, and had to prostrate themselves before the Kasbah. By 1835, an American in Istanbul wrote; "the Jewish nation in Turkey is in a complete state of indigence...vile employments...no appearance to comfort...no appearance of competency... everything where sight and smell are concerned among them is extremely disgusting..."²

However, there is a discrepancy in that modern Israeli scholarship researched and written by descendants of the Middle Eastern communities cite significant communal realities of scholarship, mercantilism, and quality of life. Did these offspring stem from exceptional pockets of 19th century literacy and integrity? Or did the eye- witnesses even understand the cultures they were writing about- for example a *qasaba* was the old English spelling of an Arabic word for stone tower. Does the author mean to say that or *kasbah*-marketplace? The cultural divide between the observers and the observed it seems was grossly underestimated resulting in many (but not all) confused Westerners too readily believing in the low nature of Ottoman life affecting Jew and non-Jew alike.

There existed idealists working with established Sephardic communities in Israel and across the Levant, resulting in increased business opportunities for the entire region. In the

1870's North America's Judah Touro and Great Britain's Moses Montefiore, both Sepharadi philanthropists, had sponsored the Bukharian Quarter of Jerusalem, built just outside the Old City's wall. Settled by Balkan and Yeminite Jews, other aliyot³ of Sephardim would follow, including an influx of Syrian Jews in the 1880's. Hebron was also populated with Sephardic Jews, living and working with their Arab neighbors, both Christian and Moslem, during this era. However by 1913 the collision between anxious Ashkenaz European Zionists and indigenous Arabs and Sephardim still living under the Ottoman Empire began to be felt. Besides importing their foreign notions of nationhood, many of the Zionists were predominantly void of traditionalism. They mistook their own technological advantages for superior intellectual capabilities. As a consequence they imitated other European colonizers and thought they could both literally and ideologically plow over the balance achieved by the native Sephardic and Moslem cultures.



Sabato Morais

For example, Albert Antebi, the grandson of the Chief Rabbi of Damascus who was acquitted of the Damascus Blood Libel in 1839 was a successful Jerusalemite in 1913.⁴ The youngest ever principal of the Alliance Israelite Universal, he served as a go-between for the Zionist settlers and the Ottoman authorities.⁵ Because the Ottomans restricted land sales to citizens only, the Zionists needed established Sephardic, Arabic speaking men like Antebi to negotiate purchases in their name for the Rothschild settlements. Increasingly however, Antebi found himself in an awkward position.⁶

"I want to conquer Zion economically and not politically," he said. As if evoking Don Joseph Nasi who had re-established Tiberius centuries earlier (Part III) to be economically viable, Antebi was perplexed over the Zionist notion of supporting the new communities financially from the outside rather than inside the country.

The advice of men like Antebi, whose families had lived in the area alongside Arab Moslems for generations, was marginalized. Newspapers were suddenly written in Hebrew

³ *Mass immigrations- literally to go up.*

⁴ *Marcus, Amy Dockser, Jerusalem 1913, Viking Press, 2007.*

⁵ *The Archive of Elizabeth Antebi, French journalist and author, www.Antebiel.com*

⁶ *Ibid Marcus pg.52.*

² *Menocal, Rosa, 2002, The Ornament of the World pg 224.*

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From the Archives

HATARAT NEDARIM

from Magen David Congregation of 67th Street

It is the custom of the Syrian Community to recite Hatarat Nedarim (Annulment of Vows) prior to the High Holidays of Rosh Hashannah and Yom Kippur. Community custom is to say it a first time during the month of Ab, ideally, according to Tradition, before the 19th of the month. It is then said



Congregation Magen David of Manhattan

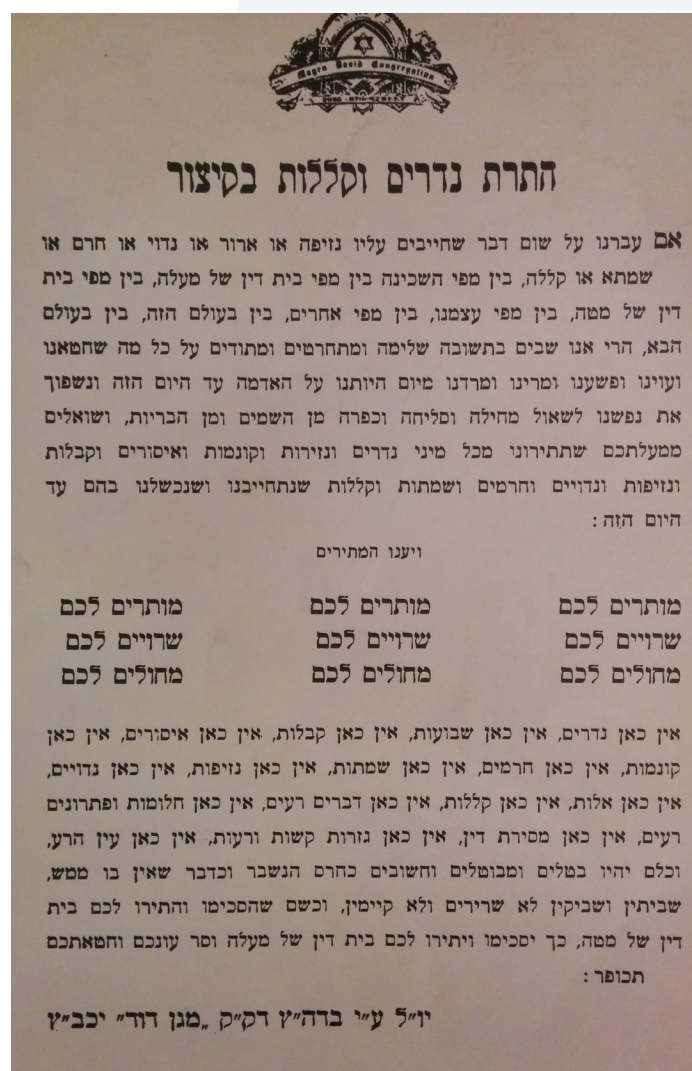
two subsequent times, before Rosh Hashannah and before Yom Kippur.

The purpose of Hatarat Nedarim is to release those who recite it from the voluntary vows they obligated upon themselves during the course of the year. It does not annul any vows they made between themselves and God. Due to the language in the prayer, Hatarat Nedarim also functions to release individuals from any curses they made or were made on them.

The prayer must be recited in a language that is understood

by those reciting it, enabling its recitation in English.

The text below and the facing picture is from Magen David Congregation of 67th Street, is printed on stationery



with its letterhead and contains the following statement on the bottom:

יו"ל [יוצא לאור] ע"י [על ידי] בדה"ץ [בית דין הצדק] דק"ק
[דקהל קדוש] "מגן דוד" יכב"ץ [יכונו בצדק]

Printed [lit. brought to light] by the religious court of Magen David Congregation, may it be established in righteousness.

Abbreviated Annulment of Vows and Curses	התרת נדרים וקללות בקיצור
If we transgressed any commandment whose punishment would be rejection [by God], or banishment, or excommunication, or herem, or exile, or curse,	אם עברו על שום דבר שחייבים עליו נזיפה או ארור או נדוי או חרם או שמתא או קללה,
whether by God or by the heavenly court, whether by the religious courts of this world or self-imposed, or imposed by others, whether the punishment is in this world or in the world to come,	בין מפי השכינה בין מפי בית דין של מעלה, בין מפי בית דין של מטה, בין מפי עצמנו, בין מפי אחרים, בין בעולם הזה, בין בעולם הבא,
We hereby repent fully and regret and confess on all that we transgressed and sinned and rebelled and disobeyed and were rebellious, from the day we were placed upon this earth until today	הרי אנו שבים בתשובה שלימה ומתחרטים ומתודים על כל מה שחטאנו ועוינו ופשענו ומרינו ומרדנו מיום היותנו על האדמה עד היום הזה
And we pour out our souls to ask forgiveness, pardon, and atonement from Heaven [God] and from people,	ונשפוך את נפשנו לשאול מחילה וסליחה וכפרה מן השמים ומן הבריות,
and we ask that you, the honored ones, will release us from all types of vows, and nazirite oaths, and restrictions, and prohibitions and obligations we accepted upon ourselves, and rejections and excommunications and herem and exile and curses that we have been obligated and which caused us to sin until this day:	ושואלים ממעלתכם שתתירונו מכל מיני נדרים ונזירות וקונמות ואיסורים וקבלות ונזיפות ונדויים וחרמים ושמחות וקללות שנתחייבנו ושנכשלו בהם עד היום הזה:
And the annul-ers [those individuals functioning as a bet din] answer:	ויענו המתירים:
You are not bound by them (3x)	מותרים לכם, מותרים לכם, מותרים לכם
You are freed from them (3x)	שרויים לכם, שרויים לכם, שרויים לכם
You are absolved of them (3x)	מחולים לכם, מחולים לכם, מחולים לכם
There are no vows here, there are no oaths here, there are no self-imposed obligations here, there are no prohibitions here, there are no restrictions here, there are no bans here, there are no exiles here, there are no rejections here, there are no banishments here, there are no allot [a type of curse], there are no curses here,	אין כאן נדרים, אין כאן שבועות, אין כאן קבלות, אין כאן איסורים, אין כאן קונמות, אין כאן חרמים, אין כאן שמחות, אין כאן נזיפות, אין כאן נדויים, אין כאן אלות, אין כאן קללות,
there are no evil things here, there are no dreams with evil interpretations here, there is no bad verdict here, there are no evil decrees here, there is no evil eye here	אין כאן דברים רעים, אין כאן חלומות ופתרונים רעים, אין כאן מסירת דין, אין כאן גזרות קשות ורעות, אין כאן עין הרע,
and all of them will be annulled and considered like broken pottery and as something of no substance, nullified and gone away not sound and not established	וכלם יהיו בטלים ומבוטלים וחשובים כחרס הנשבר וכדבר שאין בו ממש, שביתין ושביתין לא שרירים ולא קיימין,
and just as the earthy bet din agreed and released you, so too shall the Heavenly bet din agree and release you.	וכשם שהסכימו והתירו לכם בית דין של מטה, כך יסכימו ויתירו בית דין של מעלה
"Your guilt shall depart and your sin be purged away" [Isaiah 6:7].	"וסר עונכם וחסאתכם תכופר. [ישעיהו 6:7]"
Printed [lit. brought to light] by the religious court of Magen David Congregation, may it be established in righteousness	י"ל [יוצא לאור] ע"י [על ידי] בדה"ץ [בית דין הצדק] דק"ק [דקהל קדוש] "מגן דוד" יכב"ץ [יכונן בצדק]



Shabbat-Table Talks

SHABBAT HAZON

Rabbi Ralph Tawil

Value: Good behavior towards people is essential for a good relationship with God.

Whenever you hear that a person “has become religious,” there is a tendency to think of that change in terms of his taking on ritual observances. Perhaps he prays longer, keeps the laws of Shabbat more stringently, or even dresses differently. What, unfortunately, does not come to mind is that the person has become kinder and more sensitive; or that he has decided to refrain from embarrassing others or gossiping. Would a person who had decided to be a better listener and be more considerate be described as becoming more religious? Or what about a person that decided that all his business practices must be on the highest ethical standards; reporting mistakes in his favor with as much diligence as he would mistakes that cost him money? I venture to guess that in today’s parlance that these changes would be described as proper, the “right thing to do.” They would probably not be described as “more religious.” The prophecy that we read as the haftarah prior to Tish’a Be’Ab disagrees.

Background: The haftarot which we read in the Shabbat services throughout the summer months are connected with the grievous commemoration of the Temples’ destruction of the Ninth day of Ab (Tish’a Be’Ab). The haftarot of the three weeks preceding Tish’a Be’Ab contain prophecies that are very critical of Israel. The haftarot of the ten weeks following that day of fasting have prophecies of consolation and of a call to repentance. This Shabbat, the Shabbat before the fast day of Tish’a Be’Ab, the portion chosen criticizes Israel about their diligent observance of ritual laws (i.e. sacrifices, festivals, and even prayer), and their laxness regarding ethical laws. The prophet’s point is that the ritual observance is not only meaningless, it is abhorrent, when not coupled with proper behavior towards other people. Let’s listen to the words of the prophet.

Text: Isaiah 1:10-17, 27

Listen to Hashem’s word, you chieftains of Sedom,
pay attention to God’s instruction leaders of ‘Amorah.

Why do I need all your sacrifices, Hashem says, I am fed up with burnt offering of rams, suet of fatlings, and blood of bulls; and I have no delight in lambs and he-goats. You come to appear before Me - who ever asked you to do this, to trample My courts? Don’t bring Me your futile offerings, your incense is disgusting to Me, as are your New Moons and Sabbaths. I cannot stand holiday with injustice. I hate your New Moons and festivals, they are a burden to Me, I cannot endure them. When you lift up your hands I will turn My eyes away from you; Though you pray at length, I will not listen—your hands are stained with crime.

Wash yourself clean, put your evil doings away from My sight. Cease to do evil, learn to do good. Devote yourself to justice; Aid the wronged. Uphold the rights of the orphan, defend the cause of the widow.

...Siyon will be saved by justice, and her repentant ones by righteousness.

Analysis: Notice the vehemence of Isaiah’s rebuke. Yesha’ya referred to Israel’s leaders as being from Sedom and ‘Amorah, two places notorious for their unethical behavior. Bene Yisrael must have thought themselves very close to God, because they were offering all the sacrifices, praying and keeping Shabbat as they should. Yet the prophet says that all that is disgusting to God when it is accompanied by injustice and mistreatment of society’s disadvantaged and powerless. You cannot be cruel or nasty and expect God to listen to your prayers. You cannot be inconsiderate and close to God at the same time, no matter how much you pray and learn. Proper relationships with people are the prerequisite for a good relationship with God. As our Sages said, “Good manners precede Torah.”

Discussion: What does “more religious” mean? (Closer to Hashem, keeping more of the misvot.) Is it a misvah not to insult or embarrass people? (Most certainly.) So if a person decides never to insult or embarrass someone he is becoming more religious.

What do you think Hashem wants more: to pray better, or to be an honest and fair person? (According to what the

prophet Yesh'aya said, it is more important to be just and fair.) Emphasize that the best approach is to be honest and a good person, and to pray and observe the ritual commandments as we should. These things are not mutually exclusive.

How can we behave better towards other people? Treat people with respect and consideration. Ask for things by saying "please," and acknowledge someone's favor by saying "thank you." And don't just mouth the words—mean them.

Treat your friends with respect. Of course, this applies to relationships between teachers and students and counselors and campers, as well. Mutual respect and consideration are the building blocks of proper relationships. Teachers and camp counselors must model these behaviors in every contact with students or campers.

For older children: Why do you think that people who

want to become more religious usually understand that in terms of observing more ritual commandments and not in terms of behaving better towards other people?

Perhaps, because behaving in a good way towards people is considerably harder than taking upon oneself an extra stringency regarding what you can eat. It is much more demanding to never gossip than it is to refrain from violating the Shabbat.

Why do you think that our Sages chose this prophecy to precede the day of fasting and repentance that is Tish'a Be'Ab? (When we think about repenting, our focus should be on the more thoroughgoing repentance that is required for proper relationships between people).

Rabbi Tawil is the author of Shabbat-Table Talks (Tebah Educational Services, 2014).

ישיבת שערי שאול

Sephardic Rabbinical College

Undergraduate Program



2015

This upcoming year we will feature a morning program, as well as an exciting night and weekend program. We are committed to providing something for everyone when it comes to תלמוד תורה:

College Program Schedules

Morning Program A (Monday-Friday)

8:30-10:00 Beit Yossef
10:00-12:00 Gemara Prep
12:00-1:00 Gemara Shiur

Morning Program B (Monday-Friday)

9:00-11:00
Monday-Thursday Gemara & Halacha
Friday Perasha

Night Program

- Hebrutah Program:
- 8:00-10:00 PM 3 nights a week (followed by Arbit)
- One night per week for review
- Iyun Shiur once every two-three weeks

Two Night a Week Program

- Tuesdays & Wednesday Nights 8:45-10:00 (followed by Arbit)
- Two separate Shiurim each night

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Throughout the year we will have a number of special programs which will bring unity and excitement to the entire yeshiva, such as our Sukkot Simha, Hanukah Hagigah, Purim Celebration, & pre-Pesah Melaveh Malka.



Perspectives

THE DEBATE OVER JEWISH ACHIEVEMENT

Steven L. Pease

Jews have been part of my life in kindergarten, at Harvard Business School, and throughout my professional career. It was from those experiences that I developed the notion that Jews are the world's most disproportionate high achievers.

A decade ago I began intensive research to test out this hypothesis. Now, after writing *The Golden Age of Jewish Achievement*, speaking on the subject, being interviewed on radio and TV, and soliciting criticisms and arguments to disprove the statement, I have come to believe it is simply true.

As a non-Jew, I am fascinated by the fact that a people which constitute 2/10ths of 1 percent of the world's population and 2 percent of the U.S. population, has made such enormous contributions to the betterment of humanity.

To cite some examples: In hi-tech entrepreneurship, Jewish names include: Intel (Grove and Vadasz), Google (Brin and Page), Oracle (Ellison), Microsoft (Balmer), Dell (Dell), Qualcomm (Jacobs), Facebook (Zuckerberg and Sandberg).

In finance, the names are legion: Goldman Sachs, Rothschild, Warburg, Kohlberg, Kravis & Roberts, Wells Fargo, Lehman Brothers, Bear Stearns, and many more.

As World Chess champions, Jews have held the title 54% of the time since 1866.

In the 113th United States Congress (2013-2015), Jews were elected to 11 percent of U.S. Senate seats.

Jews account for three of the nine Supreme Court Justices.

More examples:

Distinction	Expected	Actual	Multiple	% of all
Nobel Prizes	1.8	181	101	23%
History's Great Inventors (Encyclopedia Britannica)	.6	13.7	22	5%
Ivy League Students	2,380	24,000	10	21%
Ivy League Presidents	.2	4	20	50%
Pulitzer Prize Non-fiction	1	25.5	25	51%
Symphony Conductors	4.2	66	16	33%
Academy Award Directors	1.7	31	18	37%
Forbes 400 (2007)	8.3	126	15	31%
Business Week - Philanthropic 50	1	19	19	38%
Kennedy Center Honors	3.2	41	13	26%

Major Theories

My second book, *The Debate over Jewish Achievement*, traces major theories to explain this phenomenon. It uses the technique of a chronology to expose the strengths and flaws of each one over time. In the end, the debate over the factors behind the performance boil down to nature (genetics) and nurture (culture).

My research concludes that, yes, genetic heritage and linkages between most of the world's Jews (the Mizrahim, Sephardim, and Ashkenazim) date back thousands of years. But Judaism is not a "race," given that anyone can freely convert, and today you will find Chinese Jews, Ethiopian Jews, etc.

Rather, culture is the most important driving influence behind Jewish achievement. Among elements of that culture:

- The huge premium Jews have placed on literacy and education for more than 2,000 years. Jews graduate from college at more than twice the national average. They attend the best schools, get better grades and go on to pursue productive careers.

- Most Jews believe in progress. They are not passive, nor resigned. They think they have a duty to help improve things. They believe in free will and intend to exercise their minds and body to advance the ball in the directions they feel important.
- Jews have long maintained very strong family values. They divorce less. They are mostly members of two-parent families. The mother is loving, strong,

“As a non-Jew, I’m fascinated that a people which constitute less than 1% of the world’s population has made such enormous contributions to humanity.”

demanding, and supportive. The father is equally engaged. Most religious holiday events, even for secular Jews, are major family events, as is Shabbat (Friday night dinner). Loyalty to family and kin is highly valued.

- Jewish lifestyle is generally healthy in terms of diet, and the approach to drugs and alcohol is moderate. Kosher conformance has served many purposes, but historically, one of them has been to mandate healthy eating habits.
- Jews typically demonstrate high levels of self-discipline (deferred gratification). We see it in their diet, their commitment to formal education, their careers, and their drive to achieve.
- They encourage and develop their verbal skills and the inclination to speak up, make an argument, debate, and disagree if they feel strongly. Generally, reticence has not been esteemed. The Talmud is a religious tract, but it is also essentially an ongoing academic debate over the evolution of Jewish Law in light of changing circumstances.
- Jews stand up for what they believe in. They have “grit.” They champion causes important to them. Wallflowers they are not!

- Ethical behavior has been inculcated in Jews by the Torah and Talmud. God demands it.
- Rationality is also embodied in the Talmud and in the lives of most Jews. One must deal with the facts on the ground and adapt. The Diaspora made anything less than this approach unfeasible. For most of 2,000 years, Jews had to exist as a small minority among other cultures, coexisting with countless other peoples, tribes, and cultures with substantially different beliefs and native languages. Staying alive demanded rationality and adaptability.
- Jews almost never adopt the mentality of victims deserving of an entitlement. God knows they have more right than most to have taken on that view, but they do not. They do not believe they are entitled. If anything, they help others who are downtrodden.
- In the same vein, Jews feel a strong sense of duty to each other and to those less fortunate. Jews are among the most charitable and philanthropic of people.

There is nothing unique about any of these cultural attributes. In fact, most of them are consistent with the cultures of other high performing groups of people around the globe. Yet the combination and intensity makes for a uniquely Jewish experience, one that has undeniably produced more “good,” far beyond expected norms.

It also demonstrates how more of us can achieve and contribute. We need not have Jewish genes to appreciate and learn from the Jews’ stunning performance.

Mr. Pease is a venture capitalist and community activist who has traveled much of the world in the course of heading companies and non-profit organizations. Born and raised Presbyterian in Spokane, Washington, he holds a master’s degree from Harvard Business School. He currently serves as co-chair of two nonprofit entities organized by the U.S. government to improve U.S.-Russia relations – encouraging Russian entrepreneurship, civil society and the rule of law. He is also active in the community affairs of the small wine-country town of Sonoma, California, where he lives with his wife, Joyce.

Special Thanks to Mr. Ezra Ashkenazi for bringing this article to our attention.



SCA Learning Program

WOMEN'S PROGRAM

MONDAYS

Mrs. Vivien Hidary, 11:00-12:15

Every week the parasha offers us insights for daily life. Both beginner and advanced students are welcome to join us in exploring the age old text using new methodologies. Together we will embark on a literary analysis to glean messages that will lead to self-discovery and further inform us about the world we live in.



Students do not need to have a yeshiva education to participate in our group. The dynamic is one of open discussion and we embrace new perspectives.

We welcome women of all ages. It is very common in our class to have families with four generations of women in attendance. Bring your loved ones and share in a learning experience!

Mrs. Emily Labaton, 12:15-1:30

Shir HaShirim (Song of Songs) is at once familiar and mysterious. We recite it weekly to welcome Shabbat and we read it on Pesah as well to celebrate nationhood and freedom. It is a duet of romantic love expressed in exquisite Biblical poetry, with moments of deep intimacy and moments of confused alienation. Why is this sacred metaphor so important to Jewish tradition? Why is it able to express our connection to G-d so profoundly and so accurately? Rabbi Akiva declared the book "Qodesh Qodashim," expressing its great spiritual power and at the same time, its frightening implications.



Our tradition has always understood Shir HaShirim as an allegory for our relationship with G-d. The keys to its

interpretation have been explored in Rabbinic, Medieval and modern commentaries. In our class this summer, we will carefully read the literal, human layer of Shir HaShirim in order to understand the relationship which it describes and then we will probe the commentaries in order to understand what the story teaches us about our relationship with G-d.

We will study Rashi, Ibn Ezra and we will read Rabbi Soleveitchik's famous application of Shir HaShirim to the Holocaust and the State of Israel.

Finally, we will study other passages in Tanach which use the metaphor of human love. We will read from Hoshea, Yirmiyahu and Yechezkel and suggest connections to Shir HaShirim.

I look forward to serious and sensitive text study, as well as open and exciting exploration and discussion.

Rabbi Moses Haber, 8:00-9:15

Rabbi Haber's class this summer will study several chapters of Tehilim. We will study these chapters in depth in an effort to unpack some of the meaning hidden within. There are two ways to read any text, the first is to try and understand the intent of the author, the second is for the reader to find meaning independent of the author's intent. Either method presupposes that no text should be read by rote, absent the effort to understand what is written.



Additionally, there are two completely different ways to use this very special sefer. The first is to use the book as a spiritual/religious training manual to learn how a Jew should identify with the world around him or her. How should a Jew react to evil and injustice, nature and creation? Reading this sefer regularly helps a person build a philosophical structure within which one can interpret the world. Another way to use this sefer is as a tool to help a person verbalize sometimes very complex emotions when in the midst of a life event. Maybe we can admit, that sometimes we might not be so

eloquent when speaking to God, but we know for sure where to turn when stumbling over our words, the work of the great poetic, the author of sefer Tehilim.

TUESDAYS

Rabbi Richard Tobias, 11:00-12:15

Rabbi Tobias' summer class will be focusing on the tefillah experience. As such, it will explore the meaning and explanation of the tefillah, as well as the halakhot. The series will highlight birkhot hashahar, pesukei dezimrah, shema and amidah, and accentuate the major ideas, themes, and philosophy behind them.

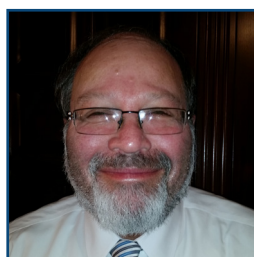
The goals of the course are to make the daily tefillot more meaningful, as well as to ensure a full understanding of the prayers. Additionally, the class will allow for a full overview of the daily shaharit experience and how all of its contents fit together to create the perfect start to an inspiring day.



WEDNESDAYS

Rabbi Naftali Besser, 12:15-1:30

To create the opportunity for the participants to be inspired and educated in order to enhance their Jewish values in the home and in their community. Using sources from the parasha and other Judaic sefarim strengthens the connection.



Rabbi Ikey Tawil, 7:15-8:15

It is truly a joy to see students using their free time to study Torah. It is also a joy of teaching to see students think critically about a piece of text that they looked at only superficially in the past.

These two joys come together beautifully in my perashat hashavuah class geared towards high school girls. By creating



a warm atmosphere and an open classroom that encourages dialogue, my students are able to share their thoughts and learn from others rather than just get lectured on a topic.

The class has three major parts. First, an overview of the week's sedra. Second; taking a few (usually we only get to one!) handpicked Rashi's and dissect each one in the traditional Sefaradi way. And lastly; I give the girls a thought or insight they can easily share in the shabbat table.

It is truly a joy to teach our holy daughters of Israel and may Hashem continue to guide our hands!

Rabbi Naftali Besser, 8:00-9:00

Using inspirational sources and anecdotes to encourage our young participants to establish a strong set of values. Discussing the challenges facing our youth in the community and how to deal with them.

THURSDAYS

Mrs. Mazal Mizrahi, 11:45-1:00

How should we live our lives? What are the assumptions we take for granted, handed on a platter of thorns, by the "Western Culture" we inevitably are a part of? Do we base our behavior on these assumptions, such as the mistaken belief that happiness is the most important goal in life? How does contemporary psychology and psychotherapy purport to solve the myriad problems faced in today's society, no doubt a cause and consequence reaction of the false assumptions? Beyond Your Ego is a fascinating book that answers these questions and more.

Mrs. Mizrahi's class, "Beyond Psychotherapy," is an in-depth analysis of Dr. Judith Mishell's fascinating and illuminating work. Based on what the author terms "Torah Psychology," Beyond Your Ego offers a coherent method of achieving inner integrity and living in harmony with one's deepest needs. The course integrates the wisdom of the book, and the students who attend certainly add their own!

The workshop will focus on the day-to-day struggles of human beings, and how to go about understanding the cause of one's weaknesses, the fault of our "ideology" and a solution

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to grow towards a higher, transcendent self. The wisdom of Dr. Mishell is the ingenious integration of contemporary Jewish thought with psychotherapy and the post-modern conceptualization of self and spirit. The class is taught on Thursdays, and Rabbi Haber graciously offers lunch and refreshments.

The lecturer, Mrs. Mizrahi, enjoys teaching. She is a published author and would love to see as many women attend. As she believes, the more women who can add a bit of their own wisdom, the more one gains from attending classes!

Additional Classes:

Mrs. Esther Hidary, Tuesdays 12:15-1:30

Topics in Jewish Thought

Mrs. Sara Mizrahi, Wednesdays 11:00-12:15, 7/1-7/15

Niddah Refresher Course

Rabbi Joseph Dweck, Wednesdays 11:00-12:15, BEGINS 7/2

6TH-8TH GRADE YOUNG GIRLS PROGRAM

MONDAYS

Mrs. Michelle Gindi, 6:30-7:30

In our weekly, hands on parasha class, girls in grades 6-8 discuss a lesson or two from the parasha of the week and then create a project linked to our learning. This past Monday after learning about Bilaam's failed attempt to curse the Jewish nation, we contrasted the excitement and zeal Bilaam had to curse the nation with Abraham's zeal to follow Hashem's will by Akedat Yitzhak. We noted that Abraham was driven by his love for Hashem to do what probably wasn't what he desired, whereas Bilaam was trying to go against the will of Hashem and driven by power, greed and the desire to curse the nation.

We then asked ourselves what drives us? What propels us into action? We then created a silhouette on a patterned

background titled "what drives me?" Inside the silhouette we illustrated and wrote about the thoughts that we have that drive us and move us to action.

While on the topic of Bilaam's attempted curses, which were, in fact, beautiful blessings, we discussed one of Rashi's interpretations of the famous Ma Tovv Ohalecha Yaakov (How good are your tents Jacob, Bemidbar 24:5). Bilaam noticed the private way the tents of the nation of Israel were pitched, each one facing the back of the next. We applied this message to our lives today, realizing that we should pause before we post or tweet our lives on Instagram Facebook, Twitter, etc. That is the "opening to the tent" of today and bearing this blessing in mind we will be more mindful. All this learning took place while we got to refresh ourselves with Igloo ices!

TUESDAY

Mrs. Rayna Cohen, 6:30-7:30

Perasha and Pe'aleem Interactive Hebrew Games - A Memorable Summer Learning Experience



Two weeks before the summer, the 6th - 8th grade girls looked forward to attending an interactive Hebrew learning experience. Together, we made our own chat on WhatsApp to discuss what we would be learning and the games we would be playing. While our combined efforts helped us **remember** the day and time of the class series, the lessons of Perasha and Pe'aleem (verbs) were also being geared to engage different forms of **memory**. In our combination class, the girls would learn and practice knowledge explicitly by declaring the new information aloud to their peers and **implicitly** by learning the procedure of verbs in different tenses for all the binyaneem (forms).

In our perasha class, concepts were taught through a sequential order of pesuqim in a color coded structure. The colors on the sheets were the same colors as the properties in the game, Monopoly Deal. The girls appreciated the visual representations as they volunteered to read aloud and participated in the lesson. At the end of the lesson, the girls received property cards from the Monopoly Deal game to explain that part of the perasha. Because related topics were "**chunked**" together in colored sets, the girls were able to

retain and **express** more information. These recall exercises help to transfer information from **working memory** into **long term memory** in a meaningful and delightful way.

While the first segment in our class encouraged the girls to share what they learned openly, it was in the second segment that the girls focused their minds **inwardly**. For the first verb game, the girls **analyzed** verb cards in the present tense to find a matching set. When the girls completed their set of present tense verbs in binyan qal successfully, they pressed a button that said, “That was easy!” In the second verb game, the girls found correlations between past and future verbs using pronouns as a guide. The pronouns were highlighted in the same color as their coordinating function morphemes (prefixes and suffixes). These skills based games challenged the girls indirectly and **primed** them to understand future patterns of verbs in the higher levels of binyaneem.

Be’ezrat Hashem, these games will help to sharpen the mind, encourage the girls to pay attention to details, and apply these learning techniques in their future studies. Special thank you to all the girls for attending and spreading the word...

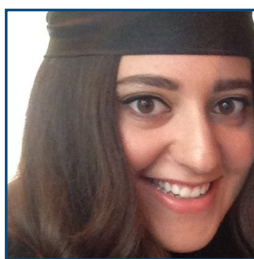
See you soon!

WEDNESDAY

Mrs. Doris Cohen, 6:15-7:15

As a mishna and halakha teacher in Barkai Yeshivah, part of my educational goal is to impart unto my students a deep respect and reverence for Torah she be’al peh (Oral Torah). Throughout our studies, we often touch upon the development and transmission of our Oral Law, and take note of halakhic systems and structures put into place by our hakhamim. It is my imperative to constantly stress that the details and technicalities of the law are not insignificant nuances, but the very vehicle for Torah practice in our everyday lives. I aim to convey excitement and passion about practical law (a subject which can easily be viewed as dry and overly intricate) by expanding the picture and emphasizing the freedom inherent in this way of life.

This summer, I chose to discuss Pirke Abot because of



its integral role in understanding the form and function of the oral transmission. Pirke Abot begins with a description of the chain of mesora (received tradition), ending with the establishments of the Anshe Knesset Hagedolah (the Men of the Great Assembly). We spent our first class, which included a mix of students from grades 7 to 10, discussing this chain and the shifts that occurred in each stage. We then focused on the final recorded stage of transmission, when Anshe Knesset Hagedolah revolutionized Judaism as it was known.

Returning from the first galut (exile) and having witnessed the powerful events of Purim, these 120 men spanning over a period of several years recognized a new need—to create a portable people; a people who could function outside of a sovereign and centralized homeland, which they now saw as an imminent reality. In addition to the canonization of the Tanakh, the creation of the siddur, berakhot, and tefillot, and the precursory moves into a redaction of the mishna and gemara, Pirke Abot or, literally, “the Chapter of Principles,” gives us a glimpse into their workings to formulate a clear and detailed application of Torah.

The first class was a hit as both old and new students shared their knowledge of the Purim story and Jewish history, asked questions on philosophy and hashkafa (outlook), and made new connections to previously learned material. As the summer continues, I hope to take a deeper look into some of the principles laid out by the Anshe Knesset Hagedolah and relate them to the lives of my students. This class will serve as a culmination of all that we have discussed throughout the year, and would additionally be an excellent foray into the world of oral law for those who have never discovered it before. I look forward to an inspiring and thought provoking rest of the summer.

Additional Classes:

Rabbi Joseph Dana, Wednesdays 7:15-8:15

Learning Program is at the
Edmond J Safra Synagogue
75 Hathaway Ave, Deal, NJ

Visit our website for more information
WWW.SEPHARDICCOMMUNITYALLIANCE.ORG

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...THE FAST IS OVER.WHAT CAN I EAT?

As far as this year (2015) is concerned, since we are dealing with a fast that has been pushed from Shabbat (9th of Ab) to Sunday (10th of Ab) there are many Sephardic sources that tell us there is especially no reason to be stringent at all and that we can eat meat immediately after the fast, as it is already the 11th of Ab.

Based upon the above it seems clear that our authentic custom of eating meat after the fast is very ancient and it has been sanctioned by generations of geonim, rabbanim, and hakhamim. So what are you waiting for? Don't be afraid to forego that samboosak and have a steak instead!

Mr. Mosseri a well-known community member who among other things is highly regarded for his knowledge of hazzanut, Sephardic history, hakhamim, laws, customs, and books.

Comments to: joseph.mosseri@verizon.net

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...PART VIII: THE RISE OF ZIONISM ...

and French-not Arabic-alienating the Arabs. Bank loans were increasingly difficult for them to obtain, and Arab workers were being replaced by Jewish ones from abroad. While still under Ottoman rule then, Arab discontent began to foment in the direction of the new Jews.

Further, since its inception, the World Zionist Organization recruited Sephardic youth. Many, both male and female, having been educated by the Alliance schools felt no need to join it, nor The Jewish National Fund, The Jewish Agency, The Halutz- Pioneer, or other fledgling Zionist movements. Besides, their communities, in or around the ancestral Land of Israel functioned as they had for centuries, and they failed to anticipate any political change. Young people from traditional communities with intact families and strong communal structures had less of an emotional need to sever ties with their people and join a socialist collective: The kibbutz lifestyle was most often at odds with Jewish ritual and moral observance.

Unfortunately, these early movements were precisely the organizations that formed the skeletal government

and establishment for post 1948 Israel.⁷ So by extension Sephardim, who lived in and understood the region and its people, played virtually no role in it. As a consequence their ideological philosophy of integration, their respect for religion, and general disposition towards Arabs was found in neither the early government nor its legislations.

After the end of WWI and the crumbling of the Ottoman Empire, the looming fact of Jewish Nationalism did not sit well with many Moslems. In 1929 the Zionists warned the Jews of Hebron that violence was on the way. In one night, mothers and babies, hospital patients, merchants, friends of a lifetime, were all slaughtered by Moslem terrorists; 67 unsuspecting, innocent souls in all. Further attacks across the country in the coming decades strained whatever was left of a working relationship between Jew and Moslem. Worse still was the alliance between Nazi forces and Haj Amin al-Husseini, the mufti of Jerusalem who sent a regiment of Muslim Arabs to fight on the European front in WWII. His was an attempt to aid Hitler and Mussolini in exchange for routing out the British from Palestine. If Rommel had not been defeated in North Africa, Jerusalem surely would have been next. By extension Levantine Jewry would have been slated for execution. Sadly the Nazis began with and succeeded in eradicating much of the age old Greek and Balkan Sephardic communities.

It should be noted that many Sephardic Jews from the Levant had immigrated to Europe, namely England and France in the 1920's and 30's. They looked and sounded like educated Arabs, which saved them from being turned over to the Nazi occupation. For the most part Sephardic Jews were able to stay out of the hands of the S.S. because no one knew who they were.

Speaking of France, by then, the wife of Cpt. Alfred Dreyfus was a 71 year old widow on the eve of the war. She hid her identity and took refuge in a convent in Valence to support her granddaughter, a member of the resistance, whom she outlived. Some family members made it to the United States- but none it seemed emigrated at the time to the Land of Israel.

Mrs. Mizrachi is the author The Portuguese Merchant, now available on Amazon.

Comments to www.nataliemiz.org

⁷ Swirski, Shlomo *The Oriental Majority*, Zed Books Ltd. London, 1989, pg 46.



JOIN OUR TISH'A BE'AB PROGRAM AT THE JCC 100 Grant Ave, Deal, NJ

SHABBAT 9TH OF AB - 10TH OF AB SCHEDULE

5:30pm:	Minha Gedola Seuda Shelishit	8:00am:	Shaharit
8:18pm:	Fast Begins. Stop eating.	9:15am:	Shaharit
9:00pm:	Shabbat Ends. Change shoes. Do not drive to JCC before this time.	7:50pm:	Minha
9:10pm:	Arbit	8:50pm:	Fast Ends
9:50pm:	Rabbi Joseph Dweck		

MEN/WOMEN

10:00am:	Rabbi Harold Sutton
11:00am:	Rabbi Richard Tobias
12:00pm:	Rabbi Raymond Harari Rabbi Harold Bald
1:00pm:	Mrs. Esther Hidary
2:00pm:	Rabbi Joseph Dweck
3:00pm:	Rabbi Shalom Hammer Michal Tawil
4:00pm:	Rabbi Ikey Tawil Emily Labaton
5:00pm:	Mr. Ricky Cohen
6:00pm:	Rabbi Ralph Tawil
7:00pm:	Rabbi Harold Sutton

COLLEGE & YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

3:00pm:	Mr. Ricky Cohen
4:00pm:	Ms. Orly Wahba
5:00pm:	Movie Screening + Discussion

BOYS 5TH-8TH GRADE

11:00am:	Rabbi Nathan Dweck
12:00pm:	Rabbi Victor Gheriani
1:00pm:	Mr. Edward Benjamin
2:00pm:	Rabbi Charles Safdieh
3:00pm:	Rabbi Charles Safdieh

GIRLS 5TH-8TH GRADE

11:00am:	Mrs. Ruthie Tawil
12:00pm:	Mrs. Rayna Cohen
1:00pm:	Mrs. Michelle Gindi
2:00pm:	Mrs. Doris Cohen
3:00pm:	Mrs. Rochelle Salem



For all questions, please contact Rabbi Moses Haber
at rabbimoseshaber@gmail.com

For the latest details visit
www.SephardicCommunityAlliance.org