

SEPHARDIC COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

QOL HA'QAHAL קול הקהל



Issue 19: 17th of Tammuz
IN LOVING MEMORY OF
ALBERT AND PEGGY HAZAN
BY THEIR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN



*In Loving Memory of
Albert and Peggy Hazan
By their children and grandchildren*

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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Cover Image: The Siege and Destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans Under the Command of Titus, A.D. 70, Oil on canvas, 1850

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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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WWW.SEPHARDICCOMMUNITYALLIANCE.ORG



Community Spotlight

SCA SUMMER PROGRAM

Rabbi Moses Haber

It might be summer. We might be at the Jersey Shore. Our schedules may be more relaxed. But the SCA programming doesn't stop - in fact, it's bigger and better than ever! We proudly announce that - for the sixth year - the SCA, in collaboration with the Sephardic Rabbinical College and the Allegra Franco School of Educational Leadership, will be providing a wide spectrum of classes and programs to community members this summer.

Our featured scholar in residence will be none other than our own **Rabbi Joseph Dweck**, who will be spending his summer break from his position as Senior Rabbi of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation of London, England "back home" in our midst. Rabbi Dweck will be giving a wide array of classes to men, women and young adults throughout the summer.

Last year's innovative Thursday night sessions for college age young adults took place in homes throughout Deal, Allenhurst and Long Branch. These sessions included thought provoking speakers as well as an opportunity for singles to meet and mingle. This year's Thursday night programming is sure to be even more of a success, with an exciting roster of speakers who will be graciously hosted throughout the community.

A new feature this year will be a Tuesday night class for High School students who might not already be attending the regular learning program. Each Tuesday night, both boys and girls will have the opportunity to hear from one of the rotating community High School teachers. Each class will take place at the Hathaway synagogue with a delicious catered dinner beforehand.

As in the past, our Tish'a BeAb programming will include

options for all ages and levels of interest. Since the fast falls on the weekend, there will be multiple opportunities for learning and discussion. A Saturday night movie and discussion will be followed by a day of guest speakers and Rabbis are sure to engage and inspire all those who attend. Special classes and activities for children will also take place, allowing parents and children to participate.

None of the SCA programming would be possible without the gracious cooperation and hosting of the community institutions and synagogues. We extend our thanks to **Mr. Joe Cayre** and **Rabbi Isaac Farhi** at the Edmond J Safran Hathaway synagogue for hosting our weekday classes, and to **Mr. Donald Epstein** at the JCC for hosting our

Shabbat minyanim and classes as well as our extensive Tish'a BeAb programming. A special debt of gratitude is owed to SCA president **Mr. Hymie Shamah** for his outstanding leadership and to **Mr. Bobby Dweck** for his tireless work in creating another *makom Tora* on the Jersey Shore.



Rabbi Joseph Dweck

Rabbi Harold Sutton (Sephardic Rabbinical College) and **Mrs. Gitta Neufeld** (Allegra Franco School of Educational Leadership) continue to provide guidance and leadership in developing this unparalleled program. Under the

daily programmatic supervision of **Rabbi Moses Haber** (Yeshiva of Flatbush and Bnei Yitzhak) and **Rabbi Joseph Dana** (Hillel Yeshiva and Magen David of West Deal), the SCA summer program is designed to have something for everyone. We invite all community members to join us for what promises to be an interesting and intellectually stimulating summer.

For further information and to receive updates during the summer, please visit **www.sephardiccommunityalliance.org** or **@SCA_updates** on Instagram

Rabbi Haber is the SCA Director of Summer Programming.



**SEPHARDIC
COMMUNITY
ALLIANCE**

BUILDING OUR FUTURE
BY PRESERVING OUR PAST



@SCA_Updates

SUMMER 2015

LEARNING PROGRAM

Start date: Monday, June 29

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

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 mincha

Mincha: 45 min. before sunset

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 HaMivrot*

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



Haftarah

A SHIFT OF FOCUS

Rabbi Nathan Dweck

During the Shabbatot of the Three Weeks (between the 17th of Tammuz and the 9th of Ab) we read special *haftarot* that do not relate to the *parasha* but rather to the theme of the Three Weeks. In these *haftarot*, the selected portions inform us about the sins of the people that led to the destruction of the Temple. Through them, we can gain insight into what we should be attentive to during these weeks.

The haftarah chosen for the second of the third Shabbatot is from the second chapter of Yirmeyahu: “*Shim’u Debar Hashem*” “Hear the word of God” (vv. 4-28). God charges the people with rejecting Him after all that He had done for them, and for having gone astray to worship idols that cannot even help them. By doing this, the nation had “exchanged its glory for what can do no good,” giving up the source of their strength, Hashem, for powerless man-made gods. Even more disturbing is the fact that God accuses the leaders of the nation of abandoning God (Jer. 2:8): “The priests never asked themselves, ‘Where is Hashem?’ the guardians of the Teaching ignored me, the rulers rebelled against me, and followed what can do no good!” Those at the religious core of the nation, the priests, the prophets, the teachers of the people, had betrayed God. They were the ones who should have been teaching the people to seek out God when things were bad, but they themselves were not seeking out God!

In straying after the idols, the people would act immorally. They would practice abominations such as sacrificing their children to the gods (in a possible attempt to appease these gods), something the Almighty tells them explicitly that he never asked for (Jer. 7:31). They wouldn’t worry about stealing, spilling innocent blood, committing adultery, and swearing falsely. But it was precisely because of these types of abominations that the Canaanites lost their land, and God already told the nation of

Israel that they will remain in the land so long as they don’t practice these abominations.

Therefore, Yirmeyahu teaches them the formula for avoiding the imminent destruction:

If you execute justice between one man and another; if you do not oppress the stranger, the orphan, and the widow; if you do not shed the blood of the innocent in this place; and if you do not follow other gods to your own hurt (Jer. 7:5-6).

The destruction cannot be avoided by bribing God with their sacrifices of bulls and rams. God is sick of their meaningless rituals, their sacrifices, their holidays, and their prayers, as the nation has lost sight of what is important. The rituals meant nothing to God when kindness and justice were overlooked!

Our focus during the Three Weeks, and certainly all the time, should be these exact *misvot*. Be active in promoting justice, in helping out the poor, in lending a hand to the elderly. Opportunities to do *hesed* are available to us daily- especially in our homes, as *hesed* is not limited to strangers. Unfortunately, we may push them aside for other things which we think are more important. The message of the prophets in these special *haftarot* is that it is precisely the *sedqa* and *mishpat*, the kindness and justice, which will bring about our redemption. If we are able to accomplish this, we can become the glorious nation we are supposed to be.

“Zion will be redeemed with justice and her captives with righteousness” (Isaiah 1:27).

Rabbi Dweck teaches at Yeshivah of Flatbush Middle Division and is the Executive Director of Tebah Educational Services.



17th of Tammuz

THE 17TH OF TAMMUZ IN CONTEXT

Rabbi Yosef Bitton

This coming Sunday, July 5th, we will commemorate the 17th of Tammuz, a fast-day. The 17th of Tammuz is one of the four fasting days in which we remember the events that lead to the destruction of our first *Bet HaMiqdash* (=Temple of Jerusalem) in 586 BCE and the eventual consequent and exile of our Nation.

1. We fast on the 10th of Tebet, when the enemy began the siege of Jerusalem, which provoked untold starvation, epidemics, etc.

2. We observe a day of fast on the 17th of Tammuz because this is when the Babylonians made the first breach in the walls of the city, that is, when they came into the city.

3. After three weeks of battle and agonizing resistance, the enemy finally prevailed. That is why three weeks after the 17th of Tammuz we observe the 9th of Ab, the National day of mourning for the Jewish people. On this tragic day the first *Bet HaMiqdash* was destroyed and burned (the Second *Bet HaMiqdash* was also destroyed on the 9th of Ab, in the year 68 of the Common Era). Thousands of Jews were killed or died from starvation and the rest were taken captives to Babylonia. A small Jewish population remained in Israel as vassals of the Babylonians.

4. A few years later, a group of Jews killed the Babylonian

appointee, Gedaliah ben Ahikam on the 3rd of Tishri. The consequences were devastating. The Babylonian emperor interpreted the murder as a rebellion against his kingdom and he ordered that the small Jewish population that had remained in Israel after the destruction of the Temple be also killed or exiled.

These four dates – 10th of Tebet, 17th of Tammuz, 9th of Ab and 3rd of Tishri – were established by our Prophets as days of fasting. In order to remember the destruction of the *Bet HaMiqdash* and of our responsibility, encouraging us to introspect and repent.

“These four dates: 10th of Tebet, 17th of Tammuz, 9th of Ab and 3rd of Tishri were established by our Prophets as days of fasting.”

It is interesting to notice that around the year 516 BCE, 70 years after the exile, around 40,000 Jews came back to Israel and built the Second *Bet-HaMiqdash*. At that point, the prophet Zekharia and *Anshe Keneset haGedola* (the first Jewish Congress) canceled these fasting days and declared them days of joy and celebration:

Thus says Hashem, Lord of Hosts: The fast of the fourth month and the fast of the fifth and the fast of the seventh and the fast of the tenth shall [now end and] be to the house of Yehuda seasons of joy and gladness and cheerful feasts... (Zekharia 8:19)

When the Second *Bet HaMiqdash* was destroyed, in the year 68 of the CE we started fasting again.

With God's help, when the Third *Bet HaMiqdash* will be built, במהרה בימינו, these fast days will be turned again into days of celebration.



Model of Second Temple made by Michael Osnis from Kedumim

Rabbi Bitton is the Author of Awesome Creation (2013).



Mr. Hymie Shamah

These *peraqim*, Bemidbar 22, 23, and 24 are unique in other ways as well. Absent are the customary introductions-“*Vayomer Hashem el Moshe*” (“And God said to Moses”), “*Vayomer Moshe el BeniYisrael*” (“And Moses said to the nation of Israel”), or the like. Moshe is never mentioned in these *peraqim*, nor any other character from elsewhere in the Torah. There is no mention of misvot. We have instead masterful poetry and fanciful lore. Few other *peraqim* have these absences and oddities.

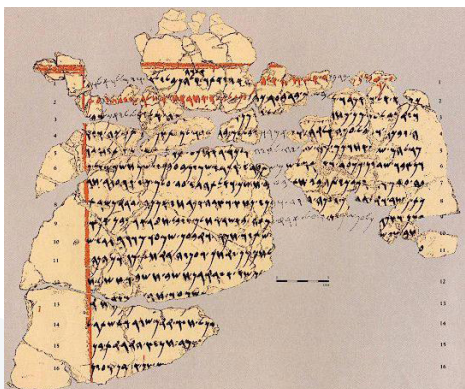
The layout of these *peraqim* also appear physically differently in a Sefer Torah. From beginning to end, the Masoretic tradition holds that these 3 *peraqim* be written “closed,” with no open spaces in the text. The words run from margin to margin with no breaks, indentations, or gaps. It is one unusual and unique block of uninterrupted pesuqim. Just like we know the layered bricks of *Shirat HaYam* (Shemot 16:1-19) and the tall columns of *Ha’azinu* (Debarim 32:1-43) appear unique because of their particular structure, alternatively, so does the episode of Bilaam appear unique with its solidity.



Interestingly, archeology has uncovered remarkable extra-biblical evidence referencing Bilaam, recorded as “The Seer- Balaam Son of Beor.” Poetic inscriptions attesting to the power of “the Seer who saw at night” written sometime around 800 BC, in a language closely related to Biblical Hebrew, were discovered in the valley of Moab. His title, “the Seer who saw at night,” is eerily befitting Bilaam and his plea to his solicitors to “spend the night and tomorrow I will tell you” (*Bemidbar* 22:8). Renowned and feared, Bilaam was a legendary force in this region. In *perashat Balaq* he makes his only appearance in our Nation’s history.



Photograph of the Deir Alla Inscription
Discovered 1967, in Deir Alla, Jordan
See map



Verse 1 of the reconstructed text reads
“The sayings of Balaam, son of Beor,
the man who was a seer of the gods.
Lo! Gods came to him in the night and spoke to him”

Why? What is going on here?

Entering our stage is a new cast of characters: The Evil King, The Wizard, The Talking Donkey. Along with: pomp and ceremony, epic fail, and the triumph of Good over Evil.

The Players

Balaq: The insecure and fearful king. Threatened by the

approach of mighty tribes of *BeneYisrael*, he resorts to sorcery. He seeks out the most powerful weapon of his day, Bilaam’s tongue. He negotiates for control of this weapon, only to have it backfire on him. As Balaq and Bilaam skirt and scout around the camp of Israel they can only scope a partial view of the nation. Never really seeing the big picture.

Bilaam: The fabled Seer. He could not see. He can’t see Hashem’s messenger that even his donkey can see. He can’t see God’s message. The seer is hired to curse. His skills are disabled and he can do no harm. He can’t see and he can’t curse. When hired to respond to the command of Balaq, he can only do as Hashem intends.

The Talking Donkey: Comically, the roles reverse. It is this lowly donkey that can see the *malach*, and understand the will of Hashem while the seer Bilaam can’t.

The faithful beast of burden bests his master.

Ibn Ezra discusses the question of the “Talking Donkey.” In an unusually lengthy response he concludes by directing us back to *Sefer Beresheet*. “If you know the true meaning of the angels that visited Abraham and the angels that visited Yaacob, you know the secret of the Talking Donkey” (Abraham Ibn Ezra on *Bemidbar* 22:28 s.v. *vayiftah Hashem*).

What is this fascination we have for talking animals?

We glorify them in our literature and media. Many Fortune 500 companies use anthropomorphic animals as spokesmen: the gecko, the giraffe, the tiger, and more. Animal mascots are memorable and relatable. For millennium, mythical and magical animals appear in many civilizations: Achilles’ Horses and Barak, Mohammad’s flying horse. Norse, Hindu, Native American cultures all have theirs too. The obsession continues today as there are 1.2 million “talking” animal videos on YouTube. Many animals can communicate with their own species, and some can actually communicate with humans, but they don’t “talk”. We can’t engage in a dialog. If we ever were to actually encounter a speaking animal it would be a miraculous event. Maybe even a fantasy that attracts us, an animal existence unbound by human responsibility. A John Lennon lyric quotes; Free as a bird. The next best thing to be”.

Where else in Torah do we find an orating animal?

Continued on page 10

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The *nahash* (snake). Again we are directed back to “The Beginning”- way back in chapter 3 of *Beresheet*. We are now bookending the entire psychological development of man and the National development of Israel to this point. The slippery tongue of the *nahash* manipulated us when we couldn’t see the bigger picture. That evil animal’s speech opened our eyes to our nakedness and the result is our exile out of *Gan Eden*, our reentry defended by *kerubeem*.

We have another glaring directive pointing us to those early times. The question Hashem asks Bilaam: “*Who are these men with you?*” Does Hashem really not know who the messengers to Bilaam are?

When else does Hashem employ this technique to ask man a question- not needing an answer- but needing man to give the honest answer? On this question, Rabbi Shabtai Sabato links the following:

To Adam: “*Where are you?*”

To Qayin: “*Where is your brother?*”

Hashem knows the answers, just as He knows who came calling on Bilaam and why.

Another navigational tool in our episode is the “seven alters and the seven sacrifices.” The number seven takes us back again to early Creation. We recall the first mention of man, before the *berit*, pre-Torah, Chapter 1.

The text is screaming for us to calibrate our perspective of this story with the early *peraqim* of *Beresheet*.

Why? What is this Bilaam episode doing here in *Bemidbar*, among the final chapters of the trek through the wilderness, from slavery to nationhood?

Bene Yisrael are nearing the end of this long journey which is a refining process. We are exiting the desert. On our return to Israel, the talking donkey speaks as this story reinforces a lesson we need to learn as we are re-entering our utopian home.

The signals here navigate back to the beginning, Man-Version 2.0 is almost ready to release, and *Eres Yisrael* will complete us. We have evolved. We have been recast. We have acquired the Torah which we bravely carry into battle, with its

own *kerubeem* as we approach the threshold of reentry to the Land. Here we are reminded why we were exiled; and why we needed to be refined, why we needed Torah. It is *Boreh Olam* that has brought us full circle to this point.

On many levels, this Bilaam story helps us recall our progress. At the end of our journey these events envelop the saga and wrap back to the beginning.

The donkey did not just speak like a well taught parrot might, mimicking its trainer. The animal displayed the ability to reason and project emotion. These are characteristics reserved only for Man, the creation God made in his own image. The misuse of our gifts (as Bilaam attempted to do) causes Man to drop rank. The power of reasoning temporarily fell to the next highest being. Created on the Sixth Day, just before Man, and the land dwelling animal can now reason!

The beast can best us.

Temptation still exists.

Honestly and accountability count.

But now, a newborn Nation, we are empowered, we are enabled, we are prepared to begin again. No longer outcasts and naked, we are clothed with Torah. We must understand the transformation and remember why we went through *Misrayim* and the desert, and why we needed the Torah.

When we are next asked the questions:

Where are you?

Where is your brother?

Who are these men with you?

We should now know how to answer. Weighing this lesson of Parashat Balaq, we would have to listen to our own conscience and live up to our divinely given human responsibilities. We are not Lennon’s free bird. We are not Bilaam’s clairvoyant donkey, nor would we want to be. In the order of life, we set above all and below One.

Mr. Shamah is the President of the Sephardic Community Alliance.

SGT. Benjamin Anthony

IDF COMBAT RESERVIST, FOUNDER OF OUR SOLDIERS SPEAK

FROM THE FRONT LINES OF COMBAT TO THE CAMPUS BATTLES OF NORTH AMERICA

SAVE THE DATE!
AGES 18-25
Deal, NJ



Thursday, July 9TH | 8:30 PM

At The Home of Nina & Eddie Esses

211 North Lincoln Road | Elberon, NJ (By the Train Station)





July 4th

JULY 4, 1976: A HISTORIC DAY OF INDEPENDENCE

Rabbi Daniel Bouskila

It's the one "Fourth of July" I will never forget. July 4, 1976. It was 39 years ago, and the United States was celebrating its bicentennial. Like all good Los Angelenos, my family was in Palm Springs for the long weekend. But while the bicentennial festivities dominated the scene, events in Uganda that day would ultimately capture our attention... and our hearts. While America celebrated 200 years of freedom and independence, a tiny nation in the Middle East reminded the entire world, including Americans, what freedom and independence are all about.

I will never forget seeing my father run from our hotel room to the pool (where most of us were), announcing to us in excitement "Israel liberated the hostages!! They sent commandos to liberate the hostages!!" I will also never forget how someone we had just met that weekend, a non-Jew, jumped into the pool, opened a beer and shouted with joy "Let's drink to Israel!" I will never forget the feeling of celebration that erupted around the pool, and how everyone, Jew and non-Jew alike, celebrated Israel's remarkable achievement. We had only American flags to wave, but it felt like we were at a pro-Israel rally. The Jews in the crowd felt that this was one of the greatest moments of Jewish pride ever, and especially as American Jews, we were proud that Israeli/Jewish soldiers carried out this heroic act of freedom and independence on, of all days, the 4th of July.

39 years later, I find myself reflecting on that historic

moment. There are many thoughts that come to mind, but one particular verse from the Torah pops out at me: "*Why should your brothers go out and fight while you stay here?*" (Numbers 32:6). It is mind-boggling, disturbing, and completely against the ethic and spirit of being a Jew, that while we bless the memory of the Entebbe operation's commander Jonathan Netanyahu (the lone commando to have lost his life during the mission), and while we celebrate the courage of the commandos, religious and secular together, who risked their lives to redeem Jewish captives and save Jewish lives, a debate still rages on in Israel about whether certain segments of Israeli society should be exempt from serving in the IDF because they are supposedly "more religious" than others.



Who can stand at Jonathan Netanyahu's grave, or stare in the eyes of the IDF commandos who carried out this mitzvah of "*pidyon shevuyim*" (redeeming captives) and say that there are Israeli men who, in the name of God and the Torah, should not serve in the IDF, because they are supposedly "more religious than others?" Who and what is a "religious Jew?" How absurd it is that we even engage in this debate. How ridiculous that we even give credence to such a perversion of what it means

to be a "Torah-abiding" Jew. How far we have strayed from the spirit of King David, the true role model who combined military prowess as an Israelite warrior and religious devotion to God as the author of the Book of Psalms. How far we have strayed from *Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh La-Zeh* "All Jews are responsible one for the other." I am tired of hearing the argument that ultra-Orthodox yeshiva boys are displaying their "responsibility towards the Jewish people" by sitting and studying Torah all day. Quite ironically and tragically, the so-called "*Avodat Hashem*" in the Haredi Yeshiva world has given religious Jews and Torah study a bad name in Israel.

Rather than creating a *Qiddush Hashem* (a sanctification of God's name), the Haredi Yeshiva world has often created a *Hillul Hashem* (desecration of God's name) in larger Israeli society, thus alienating a large segment of Israeli society from associating with anything religious.

In 1948, when men, women and children alike were fighting to defend the newly born State of Israel during her War of Independence, a group of yeshiva students approached the *Rishon L'Sion*/ Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Ben Zion Meir Hai Uziel. They asked for a halakhic exemption from fighting in the war, claiming that Torah study was their contribution to the defense of Israel. Rabbi Uziel castigated them, telling them he wished he was of age and strength to "pick up a rifle and participate in the *misvah* of defending Jerusalem." To prove his point, he joined the Civil Guard in Jerusalem, and when he stood guard at checkpoints, he proudly wore the Civil Guard's armband on his rabbinical robe. A true role model as a rabbi, as a religious Jew and as a *Ben-Adam* (human being).

On this coming 4th of July, 2015, 39 years after Jonathan Netanyahu z"l and his troops taught the world what freedom and independence are all about, I pray that Israeli society will

soon see a day when all of its citizens, religious and secular alike, will partake in the *misvah* (not the "burden," as some call it) of defending our one and only Jewish state.

In 1984, I proudly participated in a ceremony at the Kotel, as I was inducted into the IDF. On that cool Jerusalem night in November, hundreds of new recruits, religious, secular, *Hesder Yeshiva* students, native Israelis and new immigrants,

all received the same Tanakh (Bible) and *galil* submachine gun, the combination of which represents the ideal balance between Jewish learning and service in defense of the Jewish State. We all stood at attention as we looked up and saw the motto of the Givati Infantry Brigade etched in

bright shining flames above us: "*Only those who know how to defend their freedom are worthy of it.*"

Thank you to Jonathan Netanyahu, and to all of the heroes of the Entebbe mission. 39 years ago, on the Fourth of July, you reminded the whole world what it means to be worthy of our freedom.

Rabbi Daniel Bouskila is the Director of the Sephardic Educational Center in California.

Sunday, July 5, 2015
Fast of 17th of Tammuz

Fast Begins: **3:48am**
Fast Ends: **8:54pm**

“FOUR SCORE AND SEVEN YEARS AGO:” A JEWISH CONNECTION

Rabbi Marc Saperstein PhD¹

July 4, 1863 was a Saturday, and Rabbi Sabato Morais, a Sephardi immigrant from Italy serving as religious leader of Philadelphia’s Mikveh Israel Congregation, delivered his Sabbath morning sermon. His sermon contains a phrase that might well have influenced the most celebrated speech in American history.

This particular Sabbath 150 years ago was unusual for several reasons. It was the American Independence Day, an occasion for celebration. However, in the Jewish calendar, it was also the 17th day of Tammuz, a traditional day of mourning, commemorating the Roman breaching of the walls of Jerusalem in 70 CE, beginning a three-week period of solemnity that culminates with the 9th of Av, when the Temple was destroyed. This contrast in moods between the American and the Jewish calendars created a significant challenge for the preacher.

But there was a third complicating component that made the 1863 date unique: it followed immediately upon the conclusion of the Battle of Gettysburg. On Saturday morning of July 4th, the news of the outcome of the battle was not yet accessible to Morais in Philadelphia, it would not be published until special-edition newspapers that afternoon. When he prepared the text of his sermon, and when he delivered the words from the pulpit, it was still unclear to the preacher and his congregants whether the Confederate Armies that had penetrated into Pennsylvania would break

through the Union lines and threaten Philadelphia, Baltimore, or Washington, D.C.

Morais’ sermon attracted enough attention to be published in a New York Jewish weekly six days later. The headline states that it had been delivered “at the request of the Philadelphia Union League.” This patriotic organization was founded in December 1862 in strong support of the war effort and President Lincoln’s policies. Weeks in advance, the League had urged all Philadelphia clergy to devote their July 5th, Sunday morning sermons to a celebration of the July 4th national holiday. Following news of the victory at

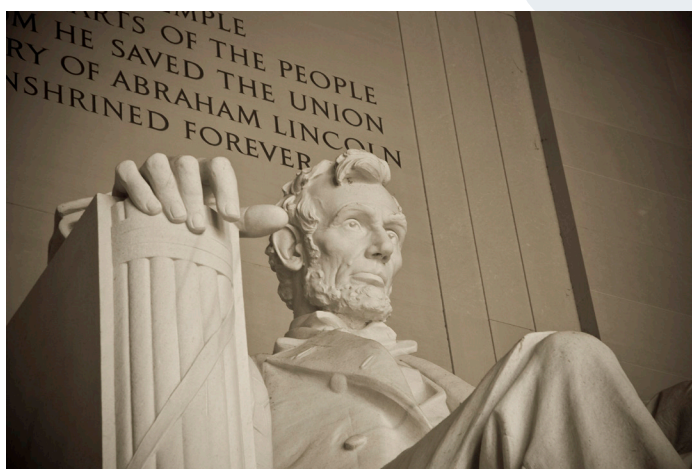
Gettysburg, the mood of those Sunday sermons was unambiguous. But for Morais, preaching on the 4th, the task was much more complex.

In his sermon, Morais confirms that he was officially asked to recall Independence Day, and that “A stirring oration on political topics may perhaps be anticipated as the most fitting manner of complying with the request.”

Yet Morais says that, both because of the date in the Jewish calendar and the bleakness of the current military circumstances, he cannot give the up-beat, inspirational, patriotic address that the Union

League plainly desired. For his biblical text, rather than selecting the verse recommended by the Union League for all sermons by Philadelphia clergy, the Liberty Bell verse from Leviticus, “Proclaim liberty

throughout the land, unto all the inhabitants there of” (Lev. 25:10), Morais reflected the prevailing mood (which would change so dramatically in just a few hours) by choosing King Hezekiah’s words spoken during the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem: “This is a day of trouble, of rebuke, and derision” (Isa. 37:3). Morais continues with an alarming allusion to the great battle some ninety miles away.



Lincoln Memorial

“This contrast in moods between the American and the Jewish calendars created a significant challenge for the preacher.”

¹ Reprinted with permission from the author. This article is based on the Preface to my Jewish Preaching in Times of War, 1800 - 2001 (Littman Library, 2008).

Address delivered at the dedication of the
Cemetery at Gettysburg.

Four score and seven years ago our fathers
brought forth on this continent, a new na-
tion, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated
to the proposition that all men are cre-
ated equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war,
testing whether that nation, or any nation
so conceived and so dedicated, can long
endure. We are met on a great battle-field
of that war. We have come to dedicate a
portion of that field, as a final resting
place for those who here gave their lives,
that that nation might live. It is alto-
gether fitting and proper that we should
do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedi-
cate—we can not consecrate—we can not
hallow—this ground. The brave men, liv-
ing and dead, who struggled here, have con-
secrated it, far above our poor power to add

or detract. The world will little note, nor
long remember what we say here, but it can
never forget what they did here. It is for us
the living, rather, to be dedicated here to
the unfinished work which they who fol-
low here have thus far so nobly advanced.
It is rather for us to be here dedicated to
the great task remaining before us—that
from these honored dead we take increased
devotion to that cause for which they gave
the last full measure of devotion—that
we here highly resolve that these dead shall
not have died in vain—that this nation,
under God, shall have a new birth of free-
dom—and that government of the people,
by the people, for the people, shall not per-
ish from the earth.

Abraham Lincoln.

November 19, 1863.

Reproduction of the Gettysburg Address

But the preacher could not totally ignore the July 4th occasion being commemorated throughout the North. And so he says, “I am not indifferent, my dear friends, to the event, which four score and seven years ago, brought to this new world light and joy.”

Three days later, Abraham Lincoln spoke to a small group and, according to the New York Times, he said, “How long ago is it?, eighty odd years, since on the Fourth of July for the first time in the history of the world a nation by its representatives assembled and declared as a self-evident truth that ‘all men are created equal.’”² Morais also could have said “eighty odd years ago,” instead he used wording that echoes the King James translation “threescore years and ten” (Ps. 90:10), evoking an unusual event with what was then a highly

unusual phrase, followed by “brought to this new world...”

Needless to say, some three months later, for the dedication of the Gettysburg cemetery, Abraham Lincoln elevated the level of his discourse from “eighty odd years” to “four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth to this continent,” possibly borrowing from the published text by the Philadelphia Sephardic preacher who, without knowing it, may have made a lasting contribution to American rhetorical history.³

Professor Saperstein holds a PhD in Jewish History, Literature, and Thought from Harvard University.

² The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, ed. Roy P. Basler, 9 vols. (New Brunswick, 1953), 6: 319

³ The Morais sermon was published in *The Jewish Messenger* on July 10, and it is conceivable that Lincoln was sent it and stored the phrase away for later use. The full text published in *The Jewish Messenger* is available on the website of the University of Pennsylvania Library.



Sephardic History

PART VII: 19TH CENTURY AMERICAN SEPHARDIM

Mrs. Natalie Mizrahi

The Papal State of Bologna, 1858. A sick “Portuguese” child is secretly baptized by his 14 year old nurse. Two years after his recovery when she is working elsewhere she boasts of the miracle. The child is then confiscated from his Jewish home by the Roman Inquisition. Pope Pious IX refuses to return Edgardo Mortara to his parents on the grounds that he is now a Christian. With the case dragging on, in 1871 the Pope says of the Jews of Rome in a public speech: “of these dogs, there are too many of them at present in Rome, and we hear them howling in the streets, and they are disturbing us in all places.”¹ (This same Pope is nominated for beautification more than 100 hundred years later. After a public outcry over this event his nomination is turned down.)

The 19th century was full of contradictions. Millions around the globe were emancipated and many others were abused. Leading the charge against tyranny was of course the young United States of America. In no short order were the free citizens of the Sephardic American communities, engaged in these battles.

In 1826, Eleazar Samuel published the first English/Hebrew prayer book in America. In the Spanish and Portuguese style, it served a population that would grow to some 16,000 Sepharadi Jews in 1849.² This may be why the liturgy at most early American synagogues was Sephardic—often called Portuguese, even though later, Ashkenazi Jews usually dominated the membership.³

In 1840, some 15,000 American Jewish citizens

¹ Kenneth Stow, *Popes, Church, and Jews in the Middle Ages: Confrontation and Response*, (Ashgate Press, 2007) 57-58.

² Esther Schor, *Emma Lazarus* pg 256. This Prayer book would be used by the Syrian Sephardic immigrants of the 20th century up until the 1950's until Sephardic Syrian preservationist author Sam Cattani published prayer books according to the Aleppo custom.

³ Emily Bingham, *Mordecai: An Early American Family*. pg. 274 Hill and Wang, 2003, quoting three separate sources.

successfully protested in six American cities for then President Martin Van Buren to intercede with Syrian officials over the infamous Damascus Blood Libel. The incident was caused by the disappearance of a Franciscan Capuchin friar, Father Thomas, and his Greek servant, both of whom mysteriously disappeared. Both the French consul and the Turkish governor presented the case as one of ritual murder that was allegedly supposed to occur before Passover.⁴

An investigation was staged, and Solomon Negrin, a Jewish barber, confessed under torture and accused others, two of whom died under torture, and one, Moses Abulafia, converted to Islam to escape. More arrests and atrocities followed, culminating in 63 Jewish youths and children being held hostage, while mob attacks on Jewish communities throughout the Middle East spiraled out of control.

“The 19th century was full of contradictions.”

President Van Buren, and Sir Moses Haim Montefiore backed by influential westerners including Britain's

Lord Palmerston, French lawyer Adolphe Crémieux, Austrian consul Caspar Merlatto, missionary John Nicolayson, and Solomon Munk, led a delegation to the ruler of Syria, Mehemet Ali.⁵ The result was the release of the last nine prisoners and a proclamation by the Sultan Abdülmecid to halt future blood libel accusations.

But the genie was out of the bottle. All across the Middle East and North Africa, blood libel accusations would remain a constant threat. Furthermore, populations in European nations felt a sudden backlash as well. So, while a victory for human rights was achieved, much of the world population still felt threatened by the Jewish community's new ability to unite.

By the time of the Mortara affair in 1858 (above) Sabato Morais, the Italian born spiritual leader of the Sephardic Philadelphia Congregation, Mikveh Israel, was upset that

⁴ So despite the Turkish Tanzimat State reforms promising equality, violence it seemed was channeled into a more organized, religious format sanctioned by many European Church authorities operating within the Empire at that time.

⁵ Wikipedia, *Damascus Affair*

the United States President would not intervene once again. Human rights violations, in his opinion, were very much the business of the United States government. He therefore omitted the prayer for the government's well-being during the Sabbath services. The congregation however was afraid to make formal protest and chastised him over this stance and he dropped his pursuit. Edgardo Mortara was never returned to his family and eventually became a member of the Roman Catholic clergy.

By 1878, Morais was older, more pragmatic, and still trying to secure safety for his co-religionists abroad. In 1878 he said,

I pleaded before the members of the Episcopal brotherhood the cause of my oppressed brethren in Russia, I received a most cutting rebuff. I was relating how a Jewish lad had his face and hands burnt with hot irons for having stolen an apple, when the Rev. Dr. McConnel... most uncharitably remarked that in a Christian country a minority that keeps aloof from the majority must expect persecution. What a companionable guest at the table of Ximenes and Torquemada that Episcopal clergyman would make!...Ah, my brethren I say it again. Take care of your own. For prejudice is stalking abroad to and would tread on us...still be alert by reason of ineradicable prejudice. Take care of your own brethren!⁶

Morais also supported the French *Alliance Israelite Universelle* schools set up in the Middle East and North Africa to teach Jewish youth the arts and a trade. He scathed at the Rebbe of the Belz sect of Hasidim for keeping the schools out of Vienna.

“Such is the profanation of the name of God brought about by a pretentious sect that assumes the

appellation pious and gives their chief the title of righteous. A piety which hugs the chains of ignorance, a righteousness which invites persecution.”

The face of integrated traditional Judaism in opposition to the German reform movement, he held his influential position for 46 years during this pivotal of centuries. In America, Morais turned his attention towards the deplorable conditions of newer Jewish European immigrants. As new social movements to help their plight came of age, ahead of his time Morais, preached from his pulpit the evils of communism because it was so closely linked to atheism. No stranger to the Sepharadi attitude towards work, he believed in fair wages for a fair day's labor. At a time when the Reform



A portrait of Emma Lazarus

movement was making headway, Morais practiced traditional, observant Judaism. Because of his less observant students and the highly secularized Spanish-and Portuguese congregants, his legacy has become intertwined with that of Conservative Judaism. He died in 1897.

In 1849 Eleazar Samuel's granddaughter, Emma Lazarus was born. Gifted, wealthy and nominally observant, Lazarus wrote poetry and editorials in the defense of her people. She began at age 16 in rebuttal to the famous American poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow who, in 1852 had visited the Touro synagogue of

Newport, R.I. in the wintertime when there were few worshippers. He described the desolateness and wrote that Jews were among the dead nations that would never rise again. Lazarus, was affronted enough to respond with a description of the synagogue when she visited it during the active summer season.

By the time she was 18 Lazarus published two books of poetry, despite having no formal training in the field. She was a proud, literate Sepharadi who would mention Ibn Ezra, Abarbanel and Maimonides in her work. She received a terrific shock however when Russian Jewish refugees fleeing Cossack pogroms began landing in New York in 1882.⁷ For

⁶ All information and quotes on and of Morais are from an article by Alan D. Corre, in *The Quest for Social Justice II: The Morris Fromkin Memorial Lectures, University of Wisconsin, 1992, pgs 19-35;*

⁷ Emma Lazarus, pg. 256: *Due to the upward mobility of the German Jewish community by*



Sephardic Customs

ARE THERE REALLY “3 WEEKS” OF RETRIBUTION?

Mr. Joseph Mosseri

Every year at this time I get asked the same question: Have Sepharadim ever adhered to any forms of restrictions during the three week period from 17th of Tammuz until the 9th of Ab?

To that affect I decided to write this brief piece that will hopefully bring some clarity to this time of the year that normally causes commotion and confusion among so many segments of the community.

Lately the style among the Sepharadim is either to duplicate and emulate the Ashkenazim and forbid practically everything during the 3 week period from 17th of Tammuz through the 9th of Ab, OR, to say that we as Sepharadim have never known of such a 3 week period and we do not have any customs of sadness during this time. If anything we only observed the first 9 days of Ab or just the week of the fast.

I have tried to research this issue and in fact *there is no one Sephardic custom!* Each community abided by different stringencies and leniencies during these 3 weeks.

Firstly, these weeks are known as the weeks of retribution (or tragedy, sorrow, suffering, etc...) as evidenced by the special *haftarot* read on the Shabatot between the 17th of Tammuz and the 9th of Ab. It's interesting to note that Sepharadim, Ashkenazim, and Yemenites all read the same *haftarot* these weeks but the (ancient) Italian communities do not.

Secondly, I have not been able to locate any reference to this 3 week period in the works of the Geonim or by HaRaMBaM!

So where exactly do we first start encountering mournful customs during these three weeks? The first place we find a

mention of this period is by Rabbi Yosef Karo in his *Bet Yosef* where he quotes an Ashkenazi *teshoobah* (*responsum*) which quotes the *Sefer Hasidim* (by Rabbi Yehoodah ben Shemoel HeHasid, 1148-1217) item # 840 which states “There are some pious ones from the initial pious ones who do not eat any new fruits during the 3 weeks because how can we say the *berakhah* of *Shehehiyanoo* at such a sad time of the year.”

If we now follow Maran Ribbi Yosef Karo in his *Shulhan Arukh* we find the following references to this 3 week period:

1. 551:9: There are those who do not eat meat or drink wine during the week of the fast, there are those who abstain from Rosh Hodesh Ab, and there are those who abstain from the 17th of Tammuz.
2. 551:16: There are those who have the custom not to wash (their bodies) from Rosh Hodesh Ab, and there are those who only abstain during the week of the fast, and there are those who suffer from the 17th of Tammuz until the 9th of Ab.
3. 551:17: It is good to be wary of reciting the *berakhah* of *Shehehiyanoo* during *Ben Hamessarim* (3 weeks) upon a new fruit or a new garment, but for a *pidyon haben* you say it.
4. 551:18: One need be careful from the 17th of Tammuz until the 9th of Ab to not walk by oneself from the 4th hour until the 9th hour (of the day), and not to hit the students during these days.

Now, before I go on to quote Mooram (Rabbi Moses Isserles) whose glosses are included in every printing of the *Shulhan Arukh*, let me ask this question regarding Maran: If he placed not walking alone outside for several hours around mid-day on the same level (halakhically) as (e.g.) not eating meat, what is the reason we seem to totally disregard his warning about walking, but when regarding not eating meat, that we view as very important?

Basically everything that Maran wrote seems like good

advice, or a mentioning of assorted customs.

Now Mooram Ribbi Mosheh Isserles adds his glosses and says:

1. 551:2: and the custom is to be stringent and not get married from the 17th of Tammuz until after the 9th of Ab.
2. 551:4: as for haircuts the custom is to be stringent and not allow them from the 17th of Tammuz.

In total we now have 6 statements of customs for this three week period. How have these 6 statements affected Sephardic communities the world over? Were any stringencies adhered to or not at all?

I have searched out many sources and this list is by no means conclusive so if you have any other evidence or testimonies please let me know!

Aden, Yemen:

They are stringent and do not allow haircuts the entire three weeks. But regarding laundry, they are only stringent and forbid it from Rosh Hodesh Ab. The same holds true for eating meat and drinking wine.

Aleppo, Syria: The following customs are from the book *Derekh Eress*, compiled by Rabbi Abraham Ades of Bene Beraq.

During all 3 weeks the custom between *minhah* and *arbit* is to sit on the floor and recite the last chapter of Lamentations (Eikhah) and then to recite Psalms (Tehilim) 137 and 79.

Engagements are permitted throughout the 3 weeks.

No weddings throughout the 3 weeks!

The *berakhah* of *Shehehiyanoo* is not recited on a new fruit or a new garment throughout the 3 week period.

Baghdad, Iraq: Rabbi Abdullah Somekh (1813-1889)

in his *Zibhe Sedeq* volume 3 tells us the custom in his city was to follow the advice of *Shulhan Arukh* and not say *Shehehiyanoo* during the 3 weeks.

Chief Rabbi Elisha' Nisim Sasson Dangoor (?-1895) tells us in his *Gedoolot Elisha'* of the custom in Baghdad of leaving the *berit milah*, even during the 9 days, with singing, dancing, and musical accompaniment.

He questions the allowance of such a custom in light of all the stringency customs mentioned for this 3 week period but he does not stop it!

Rabbi Yosef Haim (1834-1909) in his *Ben Ish Hai* tells us that even though the law only forbids marriage from Rosh Hodesh Ab the custom is to forbid it from the 17th of Tammuz. But betrothals and engagements are permitted. The custom in our city Baghdad is to have betrothals from the 17th of Tammuz until Rosh Hodesh Ab but after Rosh Hodesh no betrothals and no engagements. The *Ben Ish Hai* also tells us that it is forbidden to have any parties with music and dancing during the 3 weeks.

Rabbi Obadiah Yosef quotes oral testimony he heard from Rabbi Selman Hugi 'Aboudi, who was *Ab Bet Din* (head of the Rabbinical Court) in Baghdad, and who reported that in fact, the custom of Baghdad was to allow weddings until Rosh Hodesh Ab.

Cairo, Egypt: Chief Rabbi Refael Aharon Ben Shimon (1847-1928) in his *Nehar Missrayim* makes no mention of these customs at all in the section on Fasts. He does mention though that there are some communities who recite certain *qinot* (dirges) on these 3 Shabatot and there are those who read the *haftarot* of these weeks in a very sad heart rending tune, but none of this is the custom in Egypt! Shabbat is Shabbat and there is no sadness or hints to it at all.

It is interesting to note though (and many have missed this) that in the section of the book on the laws of sorcery and witchcraft he says the custom in Egypt is to get married at any time of the year but the majority of the community is wary to get engaged or married during the 3 weeks because

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it is not considered a good omen. (I have been told that all the above applied to Alexandria as well.) Perhaps by listing it here he is classifying it as at best a very non-substantial norm and more probably as a superstition.

Damascus, Syria: Some abstain from saying *Shehehiyanoo* on weekdays, however even these “pious individuals” would not abstain from saying it on Shabbat.

Izmir, Turkey: Chief Rabbi Haim ben Yisrael Benbenisti (1603-1673) writes in his *Shiyoore Keneset HaGedolah* that the custom in his city (and other Turkish cities) is not to get engaged or married during the entire 3 weeks.

Rabbi Haim Palacci (19th century) writes the same thing in his *Leb Haim*, volume 2.

Jerba, Tunisia: No weddings for the entire 3 week period as written in *Berit Kehoonah* by Rabbi Mosheh HaKohen. There he also mentions no cutting of hair for the entire 3 week period as well.

Libya: Certain pious individuals would gather together daily during the three weeks to recite *Tiqoon Hassot* [*Tiqoon Hassot* is a prayer of mourning over the destruction of the *Bet HaMiqdash*] after midday.

During the entire three week period there would be no weddings, new clothing would not be worn, and business deals would not be finalized.

These three weeks were considered dangerous and as such small children would not be allowed outside of the home from Sunset until the morning.

Meknes, Morocco, and Tlemcen, Algeria: Rabbi Yosef Messas (1892-1974) in his *Mayim Hayim* volume 2 is asked when do we not get married: from the 17th of Tammuz or only from Rosh Hodesh. He responds quoting the *Shulhan Arukh* and the *hagahot* of Mooram. He then goes on to say that

what Mooram wrote forbidding marriage for 3 weeks is the custom throughout the world except for one time there was a situation and I allowed a person to wed privately at the end of Tammuz.

Rabbi Messas also responds to a question about haircuts during the 3 weeks and says the custom is to disallow it all 3 weeks but since the French invaded North Africa many have returned to a custom of only forbidding haircuts from Rosh Hodesh Ab and we did not bother them regarding this since this is only a custom of stringency and something that was established by the Ashkenazim which slowly mixed into the Sepharadim. He also said, and especially now there is nothing we can say since we know how annoying it is to let one's hair grow long.



Safed, Israel: The custom is that every day (other than Shabbat) of the three weeks *Tiqoon Hassot* is recited after midday.

Tunisia: Certain pious individuals would gather together daily during the three weeks to recite *Tiqoon Hassot* after midday.

No weddings from the 17th of Tammuz until the 10th of Ab.

They would not recite *Shehehiyanoo* on new clothing or a new fruit during the entire 3 week period, not even on Shabbat.

Yemen: During the entire three week period, no weddings at all. There are also no large gatherings of friends during these weeks, and as a general rule all modes of joy and happiness are minimized. No new clothing is worn and large purchases are also pushed off until the three weeks are finished.

This list is obviously in no way complete and there is much more to write but I think we can all agree there was no set custom for all Sepharadim, nor can we say that a three week period was unknown to us.

All of the above only applies to the entire 3 week period. There are different laws and customs for the 9 day period

from Rosh Hodesh Ab until the fast and there are yet other laws and customs for the week of the fast.

I eagerly await your comments and questions and God willing I will have the opportunity to addresses all those issues and more in a subsequent article.

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

WHY MUST ONE USE A HOT PLATE ON SHABBAT? (PART 1)

Rabbi David M. Tawil

The following two part essay will briefly summarize the laws regarding placing food on a heat source prior to Shabbat to cook into Shabbat (this is known as שְׁהִיָּה *shehiyah*), as well as the laws of returning food which has already been cooked prior to Shabbat to a heat source to be warmed on Shabbat (this is known as חֲזָרָה *hazarah*). We will focus our attention on the relevant issue of using a hot plate or *Sinniye*¹ (a metal sheet upon which pots or tins are placed to divide between the stove top fire and the food), and other warming mediums on Shabbat. Our final conclusions will be based upon the rulings of Hacham Ovadia Yossef, in his works *Yabia Omer* and *Hazon Ovadia* (Volume 1).

Disclaimer: While we will broadly explore the concepts and laws involved in this issue, it is important to stress that the nuances of these laws are beyond the scope of this article, and that specific questions must be brought to a competent halachic authority.

Part 1: שְׁהִיָּה: Definition and Introduction

The term “*shehiyah*” refers to a person beginning the cooking process of a food from before Shabbat, and allowing that process to continue into Shabbat and finish on its own. In general, any act of מְלָאכָה or “work” which begins prior to

Shabbat and is left to finish on its own without the person’s involvement on Shabbat is permissible according to *halakha*. For example, it is permissible to set an animal trap prior to Shabbat, even though it may catch something on Shabbat, since one is not performing the act himself. (The act of catching or trapping an animal on Shabbat is forbidden under the category of work known as צִידָה, or “trapping”. There is a series of *mishnayot* toward the end of the first chapter of *Masechet Shabbat*, which give numerous examples of this type of act, all of which are forbidden by Beit Shammai and permissible by Beit Hillel.)

However, regarding the act of cooking, our Rabbis made a decree that under certain circumstances one is forbidden to place food to cook on an open fire before Shabbat, and allow it to cook into Shabbat on its own, for fear that one may attempt to stoke the coals and raise the temperature of the fire on Shabbat to allow the food to cook faster. This decree is known as “שָׁמַא יִחַתָּהּ בְּגִזְלִים”- “perhaps one may come to stoke the coals.” (The act of stoking the coals on Shabbat is forbidden from the Torah under the category of work known as “הַבְעָרָה”- creating or raising a fire. This is what the Rabbis set out to safeguard by creating this prohibition.) In these instances, depending on the status of the food, the Rabbis would require the coals to be swept out or covered, in order to prevent a person from stoking the coals.

גְרוּף וְקָטוּם - Sweeping and Covering

Under the circumstances which we will outline in the next section, the Rabbis required the solving of this fear of stoking the coals in one of two ways:

1. גְרוּף (*garoof*) - To sweep the coals out of the stove so that no coals remain to stoke. This teaches us that any time there is no open fire to stoke, it is permissible to leave any kind of food on such a heat source. Our modern day ovens and hot plates would fall under this category, since there is no visible fire for one to stoke.
2. קָטוּם (*qatum*) - To spread ashes over the fire to dwindle its strength. When one does so, although there may still be a fire, he has clearly done an act to diminish the fire’s heat, so there is little chance he will reverse field and stoke the coals to raise the fire. One however, does not need to cover the entire fire with ashes.

¹ Sometime referred to as a *blekh* in Yiddish

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From here we can learn that any act which makes a clear recognition that one should not come to raise the fire would fit under the idea of “קוטם.” Furthermore, the act of spreading the ashes also diminishes the power of the fire like sweeping the coals.

Are Hot Plates, *Sinniyehs*, and Warming Draws considered גרור וקטום?

According to Hacham Ovadia in *Hazon Ovadia* (Shabbat Volume 1 Pages 50-55), he explains that using a Sinniyeh to separate between the fire and the pot is comparable to spreading ashes over the fire, since it brings recognition to the person not to raise the fire in any way, despite the fact that the fire is visible. Furthermore, since on our stoves one does not stoke the coals to raise the fire but rather one must do so by turning the knob, this would be a new decree from the one in the *mishnah* and we do not have the power to make new decrees in our time, so one need not worry about the knobs being opened so long as there is a divider between the fire and the pot. (Rav Moshe Feinstein does record the stringency if one chooses to remove or cover the knobs as “proper.”) The hot plate is even more advantageous according to *halakha*, since the fire is not visible and on most models there is no option to raise the temperature at all. This would certainly be permissible.

It is important to note that the Hazon Ish (Rabbi Avrohom Yeshaya Karelitz- Kosava, Grodno 1878-Israel 1953) however, was famous for opposing this ruling, stating that regardless of the cover on top of the fire, the heat is still great and would not be considered a sufficient cover to the fire. Many Ashkenazim follow this ruling, and thus would not consider a hot plate usable on Shabbat in these circumstances. This will become even more dividing when we learn the rules of returning food to a hot plate on Shabbat.

The Status of the Food

Raw: If a food is placed on a fire in its raw state to cook right before Shabbat, one is not required to sweep out or

cover the fire, since it is clear that the food needs a long time to cook and the person will not rush to cook it quickly. Therefore, one may place a pot of raw chicken soup on the stove top just before Shabbat, and allow it to cook into Shabbat, even for service Friday night. One need not cover the stove top with a hot plate or *blech* in such an instance.

מצטמק ורע לו: This means that a food has been cooked already prior to Shabbat, to the point where more cooking will be detrimental to the quality of the food. In such an instance a person will not come to stoke the coals, for raising the temperature will be a negative. This could be the case with roasted chicken or roast which lacks gravy, where further cooking will dry out the food and overcook it.



מאכל בן דרוסאי and מצטמק ויפה לו: The following two categories are where there is an argument amongst the authorities. **מצטמק ויפה לו** means that although a particular food is fully cooked, further cooking of the food will be beneficial to the food. This would be the case with soups, stews and food which has plenty of liquid. **מאכל בן דרוסאי** refers to food which is only partially cooked, such as a third or half the way through, and can be eaten, albeit not in its best form. In both of these categories the Rambam and Ri”f (Rabbi Isaac Alfasi, 1013-1103) ruled that one must cover the fire to avoid stoking the coals, since the benefits of further cooking are present, one may come to do so. However, the Rosh (Rabbeinu Asher ben Yehiel 13th century Spain), Rashi, Rabbeinu Tam and many of the authorities normally followed by the Ashkenazim, ruled that in these scenarios as well, since the food is edible without further cooking, one does not need to cover the fire for one will not come to stoke the coals.

Early Stages of Cooking: These are foods which have begun cooking but have yet to even reach the stage of **מאכל בן דרוסאי**. This is the only scenario according to the authorities listed at the end of the previous paragraph, where one is required to cover the fire when placing the food before Shabbat. Since the food is not totally raw, one may still intend to eat it for the night time, and since it is not cooked to an edible state the fear of stoking the coals to speed up the cooking process is certainly there.

Summary of Requirement to Cover the Fire

	Raw	Early Stages	מֵאֲכָל בֶּן דְּרוֹסָא	מִצְטַמֵּק וְיָפָה לוֹ	מִצְטַמֵּק וְרָע לוֹ
<i>Rambam/Ri"ף</i>	No Cover	Must Cover	Must Cover	Must Cover	No Cover
<i>Rosh/Rashi/R"ת</i>	No Cover	Must Cover	No Cover	No Cover	No Cover

There is much debate regarding the ruling of *Shulhan Arukh* on this matter. Many believe that he followed his traditional formulation of *halakha* based on two of three pillars (those being the Rambam, Ri"ף and Rosh) and ruled stringently according to the Rambam and Ri"ף. Others however, based on other sources believed he ruled leniently. Because of this debate, Hacham Ovadia ruled that many who have the custom to be lenient in this matter have much to rely on. He records numerous Sephardic Rabbis from all different denominations, who ruled leniently based on their customs. Most notably, he quotes Rabbi Moshe ben Isaac Harari (Levorno), Rabbi Avraham HaKohen Pimintil (מִנְחַת כֹּהֵן - 17th century Amsterdam), Rabbi Avraham ben Mordechai HaLevi (גִּנְתִּי וְרִדִּים - 17th century Egypt), and Rabbi Ovadia Hedaya (19th-20th century Halab) as authorities who recorded Sephardic tradition in their respective areas to be lenient on the matter.

Conclusions Regarding "Shehiyah"

Modern day ovens, hot plates, *Sinniyehs* and warming draws are all methods which would allow a person to leave any kind of food to cook or heat up from before Shabbat into Shabbat, as they are considered גִּרּוּף וְקִטּוּם. If one can, it is best to fulfill all opinions and use these mediums to avoid any halakhic problems. Additionally, when applicable, one may also decide to be strict to cover or remove knobs to avoid raising the temperature on Shabbat. In regards to using a stove top with an open fire, as per the prevalent Sephardic custom to be lenient regarding "*shehiyah*," one need not cover the fire unless the food has begun to cook and has yet to reach the status of מֵאֲכָל בֶּן דְּרוֹסָא, before Shabbat.

Rabbi Tawil is a 6th year Student at the Sephardic Rabbinical College

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...PART VII: 19TH CENTURY...

the first time she met downtrodden, Yiddish speaking Jews, and like the rest of New York was overwhelmed.

Lazarus was included in the immigration committee that ventured to the ill equipped camp on Ward's Island in the East River. She would return many times to teach English and get to know the people. In her newspaper columns she defended the refugees, which was no easy task because many New Yorkers feared the cost of quartering them. She implored Americans to accept the other, and heralded a new era of compassion and social responsibility. Ultimately it would be her experience with the shtetl Jews that would influence a poem written for a fund-raiser for the New Colossus- The Statue of Liberty.

"... while a victory for human rights was achieved, much of the world population still felt threatened by the Jewish community's new ability to unite."

In 1883 she formed *The Society for the Colonization and Improvement of Eastern European Jews* and traveled to England and France on a fund-raising effort. She met with wealthy, famous Jews such as the Rothschilds, and the Monitiores and the French President of the *Alliance Israelite Universelle* schools, Mr. Kahn. Learning Hebrew, her work increasingly led to Zionist interests, but sadly she died at the young age of 38, before the First Zionist Congress in 1897.⁸ She did not have any heirs so her two sisters became the guardians of her legacy. As she had become the family's main bread-winner the sisters re-printed her work- purged of its overt Jewish content. One sister, in an action that was not uncommon, converted to Christianity in order to marry.

Mrs. Mizrachi is the author *The Portuguese Merchant*, now available on Amazon. www.nataliemiz.org

1870, New York's Jewish population rose to 80,000. By 1914, due to the Russian influx it was 1.4 million.

⁸ Note, the same year as Sabato Morais.



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