

SEPHARDIC COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

QOL HA-QAHAL

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DEDICATED IN MEMORY OF RABBI DR. EZRA LABATON A"H

BY RACHEL & DAVID DWECK AND FAMILY,
AND ELAINE & BOBBY DWECK AND FAMILY

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By Rachel & David Dweck and family,
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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: Moses and Aaron Speak to the People, 1896-1902 by James Jacques Joseph Tissot

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Perashat Shemot

ARE LEADERS BORN OR SELF-MADE?

Rabbi Moshe Tessone

This Dbar Torah is dedicated in honor of my dear wife Regine Monavar, whose birthday coincides with the annual reading of Parashat Shemot.

Introduction: Thematic connection between Parashat Shemot and Haftarat Yirmiyahu

Parashat Shemot marks the birth and hence the Biblical introduction of perhaps the most profound spiritual leader and prophet that the children of Israel ever experienced: Moshe Rabbenu. It is also in this parasha that Moshe is summoned to Jewish leadership, and he attempts in his modesty to resist his calling as the designated redeemer of his brethren, on the grounds that he is not qualified to achieve the monumental task for which he is called upon to perform. The striking parallels here between the parasha and the haftarah are indeed apparent, as the haftarah portrays the young prophet Yirmiyahu who explicitly conveys just as Moshe did, that he is not ready for a leadership career and also clearly projects his feeling that he is not qualified for the task which he is called upon to perform. Yirmiyahu, like Moshe, and unlike other prophets, was a seer whom the text tells us much about not only his prophetic visions but also about his life's events and occurrences, and about his prayers and contemplations. In that sense, we are able to derive from the texts of Yirmiyahu and parashat Shemot as well, much about these two visionaries and their personalities and backgrounds which will help us to gain tremendous insight into their leadership and life mission.

Analysis: The parallels between Moshe and

Yirmiyahu

In parashat Shemot and the corresponding haftarah, taken from Yirmiyahu, the similarities between both leadership personalities introduced by the respective Biblical texts are manifested in several ways. First, both Moshe and Yirmiyahu are unique individuals who in some way are portrayed by the texts as having been designated by *Boreh Olam* and in some ways were “chosen” and even reared in such a way so as to empower them to fulfill their respective leadership tasks. Second, both Moshe and Yirmiyahu claimed that they lacked the necessary skills and upbringing to fulfill their calling, and in doing so effectively resisted their Divine “chosen-ness” for leadership. Third, and perhaps most ironic, is that both leaders, despite their personal resistance to the Almighty’s calling which required them to immediately see themselves as leaders, and given the apparent limitations which they themselves verbalize and relate directly to the Hashem as being a hindrance to their leadership abilities, eventually both display their unlimited potential as they realize a career of national greatness and self-actualization in their respective leadership missions and in their prophecy.



Rabbi Moshe Tessone

Moshe and Yirmiyahu: Designated for Leadership

Although born to a noble Levite family, namely that he was the son of Amram and Jochebed, Moshe’s very upbringing in his formative years as an adolescent and young man was in the palace of Pharaoh, perhaps the mightiest world leader in his day. In spite of the fact that all first born Israelite males that were born concurrently in Moshe’s day were ordered to

death by being cast in the Nile, nevertheless, the Almighty through *"hashgaha pratit"* (Divine personal intervention) manipulated the events of the day so that Moshe would not only survive the harsh Pharaonic decree, but was to grow up **in the very home** of the ruler that would by royal decree have had him drown in the Nile along with his other Israelite brethren, had the decree not been circumvented through Divine intervention of the highest order.

It is even more compelling that he also grows up **in the very home** of the ruler that he eventually confronts head on, challenges and overcomes as he becomes the redeemer of Israel. The very fact that Moshe was raised by spending the better part of his formative years in such close proximity to the world's most powerful noblemen and rulers who dwelled amongst the Egyptian royalty was in effect part of a divinely engineered "leadership training program" tailor made for Moshe Rabbenu. If Moshe was to challenge and ultimately overpower the Egyptian political machinery and military might to benefit his people, then it was certainly a prerequisite for him to have had an intimate and deep understanding of the inner workings of Egyptian leadership and its psyche, something that could most effectively and perhaps only be attained by being raised in that environment from a very young age. Furthermore, Moshe's being born into the tribe of Levi, and to parents as noble and influential as Amram and Jochebed, speak to his having inherited a unique spiritual preparedness for leadership, one that could only arise from being the product of such a home dedicated to Jewish spiritual leadership, and the very home from which Moshe's siblings Aharon and Miriam respectively emerge and become most distinguished national leaders in their own right.

In contrast, Yirmiyahu, according to the text, is born into a Kohanite family from the village of Anatot. Anatot was a place that was in relatively close proximity to Yerushalayim, to where Evyatar Ha'Kohen was exiled in the days of Shlomo Hamelekh, and was in effect rendered unable to serve Hashem in a Kohanite capacity (Melakhim Aleph 2: 26-27). It is very probable that Yirmiyahu hails from this particular Kohanite family as the text relates that he was *"min ha'kohanim asher be'anatot..."* - "from the kohanim who

are in Anatot..." (Yirmiyahu 1:1). This fact is particularly noteworthy because it points out that even though Yirmiyahu was of Kohanite descent, he still was not operating within the leadership framework of kehuna or in any form of official priestly service when he heard God's calling.

At this point, Hashem tells him that he was consecrated from conception and sanctified for leadership before he exited his mother's womb and entered the world. Hashem further tells him *"...navi la'goyim netatikha"* - "I have set you as a prophet onto the nations" (Yirmiyahu 1:3), which clearly indicates to Yirmiyahu that Hashem had designated him for prophesy, and that similar to Moshe he was "born to lead" as it were. From this *pasuq* we also derive that it was quite explicitly related to Yirmiyahu that even though his leadership birthright in the technical sense may have been some form of Kohanite office, nonetheless his Divine mission was broader and more global in scope, as he was destined to serve in prophecy not only to the Israelite people, but to the nations of the world.

Both Moshe and Yirmiyahu's prophetic "chosen-ness" are clearly apparent from the texts at hand, and the similarities between them continues into the next phase of our discussion which will compare their respective reaction to Hashem's calling and the subsequent deliberations that ensue between each prophet and *Boreh Olam*.

"The striking parallels here between the parasha and the haftarah are indeed apparent..."

Moshe and Yirmiyahu: Resisting Leadership

It is in Shemot that Hashem reveals himself to Moshe for the very first time, when Moshe witnesses a fascinating and nature defying phenomenon, a burning bush upon the mountain which was not being consumed by the surrounding fire. It was at this juncture that Hashem charged Moshe with the task of becoming the redeemer of Israel, thereby instructing him to confront Pharaoh and demand the release of his people. Moshe's response was one of doubt and refusal, and so he discussed and even argued with Hashem about the viability of his leadership mission. Moshe's resistance was based on 3 key points. First, he contended that he lacked the skills that were needed to achieve this mission. Second, he did not have the confidence that Pharaoh would

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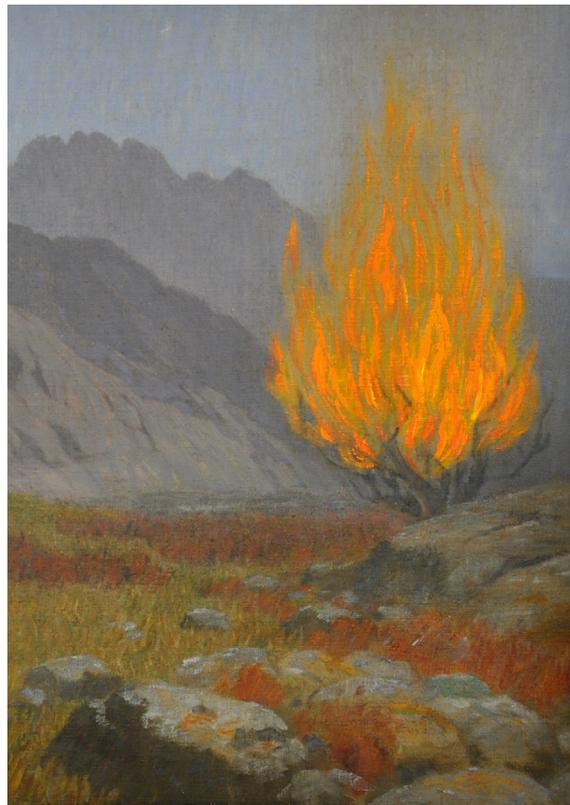
believe him and that the Israelite nation would be receptive to his words (we will later see that Yirmiyahu shared this exact sentiment upon his being called). Third, Moshe also felt that perhaps his brethren in Egypt were not worthy of G-d's miraculous salvation.

One of Moshe's arguments was that he had a speech impediment as he tells the Almighty "*lo ish devarim anokhi...*"- "I am not a man of words..." and he continues "*...ki khevad peh u'khvad lashon anokhi*"- "...for I am heavy of mouth and heavy of speech" (Shemot 4:10). According to our sages, Hashem continued to charge Moshe for a period of seven days to go and talk to Pharaoh on behalf of the Jewish people, and for an entire week Moshe refused, until God finally assigned this task to his brother Aharon.

Moshe Rabbenu's resistance to leadership is clearly apparent from the text of Shemot and the accompanying midrashic commentaries. In spite of this, the scope of Moshe's life mission and what he was to become, which in essence was to be not only the redeemer of Israel but also to be the most profound and pre-eminent spiritual guide that the Jewish nation ever had, speaks to the fact that leaders may not always see themselves as such, but nevertheless that does not preclude them from achieving enormous heights in communal service. In Moshe Rabbenu's case the vastness of his impact on the Jewish people and their eternal spiritual heritage was felt for some three millennia, and is amazingly, still apparently an essential and indispensable part of the practice of Judaism even today.

In a similar vein to Moshe, Yirmiyahu resists becoming a prophetic leader to the "*goyim*," the world's nations as he (just like Moshe), tells Hashem that he "knows not how to speak..." and he further relates "*...ki na'ar anokhi*," "...for I am merely a lad" (Yirmiyahu 1:6), thus implying that he is

not fit for leadership. Rashi explains here that Yirmiyahu was really reflecting his inadequacy in comparison to Moshe. Moshe Rabbenu led the nation from the hands of Egypt's cruelest tyrants, through the barren desert and the splitting of the sea, and through him the nation witnessed the Siniatic revelation and miracles that were unimaginable and never to be seen again. It was only after Moshe had done all this that he achieved the complete confidence of his followers and was able to prophesy on the tribulations and afflictions that were to befall Israel. Yirmiyahu, in comparison to this was not only much younger than was Moshe when he began to prophesy, but had not been given the opportunities to achieve the popular rapport and national trust that Moshe after much personal effort and toil later enjoyed, in order to prophesy as he did. It is for this very reason that Yirmiyahu was concerned that his prophecies would not be well received.



The Burning Bush

In this connection, the time period in which Yirmiyahu begins to prophesy is of particular significance to our analysis as well. Yirmiyahu operated during the years 626-586 BCE, which effectively was during the generation that preceded the destruction of the first Temple, and he continued during and after its destruction as well. The nation in Jerusalem was confident that Hashem would not let His sanctuary and His people falter despite their sinful ways, and that was also a reason that Yirmiyahu resisted his mission, knowing that the nation would not take favorably to his words, but rather would treat his warnings of impending doom with skepticism and even belligerence.

In similar ways both Moshe and Yirmiyahu resist leadership to varying degrees and at different stages in their lives and even more surprisingly they do so in the face of Hashem's personal invitation. Nonetheless, in both cases the Almighty does get his way (as always is the case), and despite their resistance, both of these men deliver a stellar performance in fulfilling what Hashem asks of them with the

utmost commitment in honor and dignity.

Moshe and Yirmiyahu: The Rise to Leadership

While Moshe's resistance in comparison to Yirmiyahu was more drawn out and Yirmiyahu's more succinct, in the end, they both dedicatedly take upon their respective national leadership missions. The central question that is relevant to our discussion of both leaders and the respective texts (in Shemot and Yirmiyahu) that tell us of them, is really aimed at understanding what is particularly unique to Moshe and Yirmiyahu **that speaks to the issue of leadership making**. Did these noble men become great leaders because of their respective "chosen-ness" and because they were reared to such a calling from birth (as was the case with Moshe), or were they consecrated from the womb (as was the case with Yirmiyahu)? Or is there some other operating factor in the consciousness of these leaders that can enlighten our understanding of how leaders come to be?

In order to gain insight to this question, we must first realize that in both parashat Shemot and haftarat Yirmiyahu it is the "*haqdasha*" (sanctification) of leaders as depicted in these texts that is the key component of similarity which speaks to the issue of leaders and how they are made.

The ultimate common denominator in our comparison of Moshe and Yirmiyahu and what really defined their leadership making experience is that the **consecration** of both Moshe and Yirmiyahu takes place through some sort of divine inner revelation that occurs at a critical juncture in the life of both of these great men.

Granted that both Moshe and Yirmiyahu were consecrated from early on, nevertheless, their "*haqdasha*" was only consummated because at that particular juncture, which was effectively their moment of revelation, they were **tuned in** to their inner purpose in life, and thereby they were both able to hear the divine calling prompting them to reach high and become the extraordinary historic personalities that they were meant to be. The fact that Moshe was prepared

from birth to lead, and that Yirmiyahu was designated from the womb to prophecy, is only significant because they both "heard" the message of their "*haqdasha*" and responded in kind. Pre-designation alone does not always lead to leadership, but it very well may if the designated one actually "hears" his or her calling and becomes pro-active in fulfilling their personal mission.

In a similar vein, one may also argue that the resistance to leadership that is common to both Moshe and Yirmiyahu is ultimately not as important as the fact that they both actually **heard the calling** and acted on it despite their shared initial resistance. The mere fact that they both articulated their arguments vis a vis the Almighty, further proves that both these great prophets really **heard, understood, processed, and internalized** the essence of God's message to them. Their mutual deliberations whereby each prophet engaged *Boreh Olam* about their qualifications for leadership is evidence of a self-evaluation that they were experiencing, and this self-analysis and soul searching, is, in and of itself,

a vital first step that any new leader must undertake if they are to become *bona fide* and committed to the cause of any nation.

Conclusion: A Message for Today's Leaders

Perhaps too many would be leaders both historically and in our day, neither aspire for,

nor resist leadership opportunities that they may encounter because they are not properly tuned in and thus never even really **hear** that they are being called. It is exactly that very deep and personal inner message of leadership mission and national purpose that both Moshe heard at the burning bush in parashat Shemot, and that Yirmiyahu correspondingly tells us about in our haftarah, which is the central point of similarity in both their careers and is the very defining attribute that enabled them to rise to unimaginable heights in service to their people.

It is precisely this concept of "**hearing the inner voice,**" that speaks as a subtle and yet powerful lesson to all

"...both Moshe Rabbenu and Yirmiyahu set a gold standard in our understanding that great national figures are born and simultaneously self-made."

THE MIDWIVES

Rabbi Moshe Shamah¹

When oppressive labor and affliction did not slow the Israelite population surge, the Egyptians resorted to progressively crueler, more drastic measures, still without success. The king did not choose to outright kill a large number of slaves on some pretext, as he is known to have had the power to do, as that would presumably harm the economy and tarnish his reputation. He decided to work through the midwives who attended to the birthing Hebrew women. (“Hebrew” is often used as the foreigner’s designation of “Israelite.”)

The king ordered the midwives to engage in male infanticide. When they saw the baby while the mother was still on the birth-stool or, alternatively, as the infant was deposited in the receiving container (it is not clear what the Hebrew **הָאֲבֹנִים** refers to), if it were a boy they were to kill him, thus providing a gradual solution to the king’s fears. Perhaps he meant that the deaths should appear as stillbirths or accidents, to prevent the possibility of a slave rebellion. Females would be permitted to live, as they did not constitute a military threat and would be of value as maidservants and as mates for slaves of other ethnic groups, thus producing slaves to replace the Hebrew males. (Ironically, the king is strictly focused on the males; the early stages of salvation, however, as described in the unfolding narrative, ensue through females: midwives, the mother and sister of Moses, and daughter of Pharaoh.)

Although the king believed that the midwives would obey his orders to kill the boys, and surely the population at-large would do so, at that point he did not propose public infanticide. Perhaps he did not want to besmirch his nation’s civilized image. But the midwives feared God and defied the king’s orders time and again and the Israelites continued to

burgeon. (Cassuto [1967, 14]² suggests that deployment in successive verses of the attested forms of “see,” **וַיִּרְאֵהוּ**, and “feared,” **וַיִּירָא**, being anagrams, is intended to reflect the irony in the case.)

Frustrated, the king then proclaimed that all males born [to the Israelites] were to be cast into the Nile. The narrative does not offer further details about this decree; it speaks for itself. The chapter is concluded on the note that the new nation was on the verge of extinction. Thus, one of the major themes that courses through the book of Genesis continues into the book of Exodus. Just as barren wives, famines and rivalries jeopardized the very existence of the founding family that was to become the nation of God, the continued existence of the nation is now threatened. Israel is to be a nation that relies on God’s ongoing favorable intervention for its survival.

As the midwives endangered their lives to save the lives of the baby boys, God rewarded them by “making them homes” (Exodus 1:21). It is possible that professional midwives were women who did not have children of their own; in a “measure for measure”

reward, God intervened, enabling them to have their own families.

Of what nationality were the midwives? The pivotal phrase *hamyalledot ha’ibriyyot* (v. 15), with slight variation of accentuation, can either be translated “Hebrew midwives” or “midwives of the Hebrews.”

However, it is much more likely that the midwives were non-Hebrews (as was rendered in the Septuagint; also see Abarbanel). Firstly, how could the king have taken for granted the cooperation of Hebrew midwives for such



Pharaoh and the Midwives, watercolor circa 1896-1902 by James Tissot

¹ Excerpted from *Recalling the Covenant* (2011, Ktav), pp. 251-252

² Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1967).

ongoing barbarity? Common sense would advise that it is at least a problematic matter; many examples are known from history of individuals circumventing and resisting authority when they were ordered to kill innocent members of their own nationality or ethnic group. Secondly, when Pharaoh discovered that the midwives were not complying with his wishes, it is inconceivable that he would not interpret their behavior correctly, had they been Hebrew, realizing that they would not kill their own kin. His very asking for and listening to an explanation indicates that he was dealing with non-Israelite midwives. Finally, the midwives' answer to Pharaoh (v. 19), "for unlike Egyptian women are the Hebrews, for they are animal-like" (or perhaps "lively"), is more consistent with the speakers not being Hebrew women. Had they themselves been Hebrew they would not so consistently speak of Hebrew women in the third person but would inevitably have used some first person term.

“This is an ever-inspiring example of moral fortitude to “fear God” even in defiance of the highest temporal authority in the land.”

Their names – Shiphrah and Puah – although Semitic, might be translations from the Egyptian or, more likely, an indication that they derived from non-Hebrew Semitics, who had migrated to Egypt through the years, a phenomenon well known from Egyptian history.

Thus, the midwives resisted the king's orders, jeopardizing their personal welfare, to save the lives of another nationality's children. This is an ever-inspiring example of moral fortitude to “fear God” even in defiance of the highest temporal authority in the land. It is significant that the Torah highlights an aspect of the survival of the Israelite nation as brought about by such valiant behavior; undoubtedly it is meant to etch unto the consciousness of future generations that such values must ever be honored and that such admirable characteristics may be found in all nationalities.

Rabbi Shamah is the head rabbi of Sephardic Synagogue.

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...ARE LEADERS BORN OR SELF-MADE?

who would lead but all too often never actually do. These two truly remarkable men **enabled** their very own “*haqdasha*” (consecration) into leadership responsibility to become effective by tuning in and connecting to “the calling” that all those who aspire or have potential for leadership must hear and must pay close attention to in order to begin envisioning themselves as true leaders, and in doing so gain a sense of what real leadership entails and requires of them.

The self-analysis described above, that both Moshe and Yirmiyahu underwent is what forced them to take a step forward for a brief moment and think of themselves for the first time as possible leaders, and in doing so they ask themselves the hard question: “am I truly fit to lead?” In order to evaluate their fitness for leadership, they must first envision themselves in leadership roles thereby effectively enabling their own consecration to begin to take effect. This is the contemplative dynamic that must be awakened today in the consciousness of all individuals who possess the character traits and skill sets needed for great communal vision and national leadership, if our generation is to produce more leaders who emulate the likes of Moshe Rabbenu and Yirmiyahu Ha-Navi, and the many others who were inspired by them and followed in their path throughout the generations.

In this way, both Moshe Rabbenu and Yirmiyahu set a gold standard in our understanding that great national figures are *born* and simultaneously *self-made*. They exemplified that truly celebrated leaders most certainly do come to be through some form of Divine and/or preordained **consecration** and “*haqdasha*” exercise, but ultimately such individuals are only able to actualize their true potential for astounding leadership by staying tuned in to the deep inner voice that emanates from their personal consciousness of *Boreh Olam's* presence and by allowing that voice to direct their purpose in life in a way which propels them to **nurture, serve, and lead** their people with distinction, dignity and honor.

Rabbi Tessone is Director of YU's Sephardic Community Program and serves as rabbinic faculty at Yeshiva University.

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FAILURE IS AN OPTION

Rabbi Joseph Dweck

“Freedom is not worth having if it does not include the freedom to make mistakes.” — Mahatma Gandhi

Over two centuries have passed in our story from the close of Bereshit. Yoseph and his brothers have died, and their family of seventy has grown into a plentiful nation. But they are not free in the land in which they have multiplied. Under the whips of taskmasters and whims of a tyrannical king, the people are oppressed and their children buried alive under the stones of the cities that they build. Their spirits are all but extinguished in the bitterness of slavery. It is an epic story of our ancestors who, in the crucible of captivity, yearned for a life of freedom. From under the weight of their labor they called out to the God of their fathers hoping for deliverance.

And their pleas for help went up to the Lord from the bondage. (2:23)

God hearkened to their cries...God listened to the Children of Israel. God knew. (2:24-25)

And so began the complex processes necessary to create a nation of free people who could shape their own futures. Freedom is not easily achieved, and it brings with it many dangers that threaten safety. With true freedom, the consequences of our actions, no matter how dangerous, are real and they reach us. We allow for vulnerability knowing that when we act freely we will expose ourselves to, and be responsible for, the repercussions, whatever they may be.

One peril that comes with freedom is the threat of failure. With each opportunity for choice and action that a free life brings, there is a possibility of defeat. In this light, it is intriguing that the Bible's first story about Moshe, the agent of freedom, is one of failure. God sends him to negotiate the people's redemption with Pharaoh. With severe reluctance,¹ Moshe finally accepts the job but insists on going about it on his terms. God grants Moshe the liberty of choosing his own

approach, and that very license facilitates Moshe's failure. By the end of the parasha, even with all of the special signs that he asks God to send him, Moshe loses the negotiation with Pharaoh, and, to add to the pain, Pharaoh doubles the difficulty of the slaves' labor.² As a result, the people lose faith in Moshe, and reject him.

They confronted Moshe and Aharon, stationing themselves to meet them when they came out from Pharaoh. They said to them: "May God see you and judge you for making our smell reek in the eyes of Pharaoh and his servants, giving a sword into their hand to kill us!" (5:20-21)

Failure is a stepping stone towards success, and an integral element of freedom. One cannot be free without failing. Freedom comes with possibilities and options, and not all options lead to successful ends. When we fear failure, we not only keep ourselves from success, we miss doors that are open to us and we lock ourselves into a life of restriction. Moshe could have protested after his initial misfire and quit the endeavor altogether. Instead, he took responsibility for his choice, and the resulting pain, in order to deliver a proud and free nation.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Dweck is the Senior Rabbi of the Spanish and Portuguese Sephardi Community of the United Kingdom.



¹ 3:11,13; 4:1,10,13

² 5:7-19



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ARTIFICIAL WOUND OF PALESTINIAN REFUGEES HAS FESTERED TOO LONG

Ambassador Danny Danon

NEW YORK (JTA) — Every time Palestinian leaders sit down at the negotiating table, or give a public speech, they never fail to raise the plight of the 700,000 Arab-Palestinians displaced when they refused to accept Israel's existence in 1948.

For too long, the State of Israel and the global Jewish community have done too little to memorialize and honor the other side of that story — the 850,000 Jewish refugees from Arab countries.

For many Jews, these are personal stories, family accounts told around the Shabbat table. It is now our duty to ensure that the world finally recognizes the stories of these forgotten refugees.

For over 2,000 years, places like Algiers and Aleppo, Tunis and Cairo, Aden and Tripoli and so many others across the Arab world were vibrant centers of Jewish life. The Jews in these communities did not always have much in the way of material possessions, but they were rich in culture and in the spiritual heritage of our people.

They gave us the greatest of Jewish leaders, magnificent synagogues, great works of scholarship — treasures of our tradition that we still carry with us today. These Jews contributed immensely to the broader society, in the fields of Arab art and literature, in medicine, in government and in commerce.

It is important to note that despite all this, when Israel was established in 1948, the Arab governments not only fought the new state, they also turned against their Jewish communities that had lived in peace with their neighbors for generations. Facing murderous anti-Jewish riots and government confiscation of wealth, nearly 1 million Jews were forced to flee the places their families had called home for generations, leaving behind everything they had.



Ambassador Danny Danon

Yet these hundreds of thousands of families did not end up in refugee camps isolated from the rest of society. They do not have a special U.N. agency lobbying on their behalf. And the reason is simple: Unlike the Arab countries that refused to absorb the Palestinian refugees, the State of Israel opened its doors to fellow Jews. There was, and always is, more that could have been done to smooth the absorption of these new Israelis, but the fact is that today they are integrated into all levels of Israeli society.

Today, these Jews who came from many places go by many names — Jews of the Arab lands, Sephardic Jews, Mizrahi Jews — but no one ever refers to them as refugees. As they shouldn't. Their most important name today is the name they share with the Jews around the world: Am Yisrael, the nation of Israel.

We are one people, and this presents us with the obligation to remember where we come from: from Warsaw

and from Damascus, from Berlin and from Baghdad.

Together, as one people, we have an obligation to ensure that the stories of the Jews from the Arab countries are not forgotten. We must strive to keep the memory of these communities alive, and most importantly, to give them the recognition they deserve.

But we must do more than just remember. We must ensure that others see the light, and hear these stories, so that the plight of the forgotten refugees will become known across the world. As Israel's ambassador, I pledge to represent the right and just path of the State of Israel in the parliament of nations.

Israel is a stronger country today because of the unique contribution that each Jewish community made to the world's greatest start-up at its founding.

“For over 2,000 years, places like Algiers and Aleppo, Tunis and Cairo, Aden and Tripoli and so many others across the Arab world were vibrant centers of Jewish life.”

We have proven to the world that when nations act responsibly, there is absolutely no reason for a refugee crisis to last for more than a few years. Now is the time for the community of nations to enact fair and practical solutions for the rest of the world's refugees and

put an end to the artificial wound of Palestinian refugees that has festered for way too long.

Ambassador Danny Danon is Israel's permanent representative to the United Nations

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Sephardic Rabbis

RABBI ABRAHAM SABA (1440-1508) AND THE ISLAND OF ALLIGATORS

Rabbi Yosef Bitton

Rabbi Abraham Saba was born in Castile, Spain, in 1440. When the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, there was no safe place to go. No route was safe from pirates, hunger, and the ever present threat of plagues and epidemics. 120,000 Jews fled to Portugal. At that time, Portugal appeared as the most reliable place. No sea to cross, a very similar language, and an Iberian culture. Rabbi Abraham Saba was one of those Jews who left to Portugal pursuing a new beginning. But the poor Jewish refugees from Spain soon discovered that the horrors and tragedies they were living, were not over.

The Portuguese king John II, eager to increase his treasure, approved the admission of Jews, requiring them to pay a large sum of money, 100 Cruzados. Those who could not pay that amount, could reside in Portugal for a maximum of eight months, for a smaller sum, 8 Cruzados a head. Most Jews, including Rabbi Saba, moved to the city of Oporto, Portugal's main port, hoping to navigate soon to a new destination in Italy, Turkey, Greece, or North Africa. But the shortage of ships made their exit impossible. And after the eight months ended, King

John proclaimed that those who could not renew their residence paying for 8 additional months, should convert to Christianity or they would be automatically considered his slaves. No one had money to pay. The refugees had left Spain with empty hands. The families who refused conversion witnessed one of the worst tragedies

girls, were sent on a ship to Sao Tome and Principe, a remote island off the coast of Guinea, recently colonized by the Portuguese explorers, famous for the abundance of carnivorous alligators. According to reports from that time, most of these children died, some eaten by the large reptiles, and others by hunger or neglect.



Rabbi Yosef Bitton

ever suffered by Sephardic Jews. King John II ordered separating the children from their parents, something not even the cruel Spanish Inquisition dared to do. Thousands of young children were swept into the convents to be raised as Catholics. 700 adolescents, boys and

Rabbi Saba describes this terrible event in his book *Tseror Hamor*, parahtat Ki Tabo.

זאת היא קללה אחרת שקרה לנו בעונותנו בפורטוגאל, שלקה המלך את הבנים ואת הבנות הקטנים ושלחם בספינות לאיי הנחשים כדי לעשות שם יישוב.

"This is the great tragedy that befell us in Portugal, the King took the children and sent them in boats to the islands of alligators, to populate that place."

Two of Rabbi Saba's children were taken from him in these circumstances, and Rabbi Saba never saw them again.

Searching for his children, he tells, he dressed as a gentile and visited numerous convents. In each convent he recited aloud the *Shema Israel*. Hearing the voice of Rabbi Abraham, attracted by the sweet and familiar melody of the *Shema*, the Jewish children would

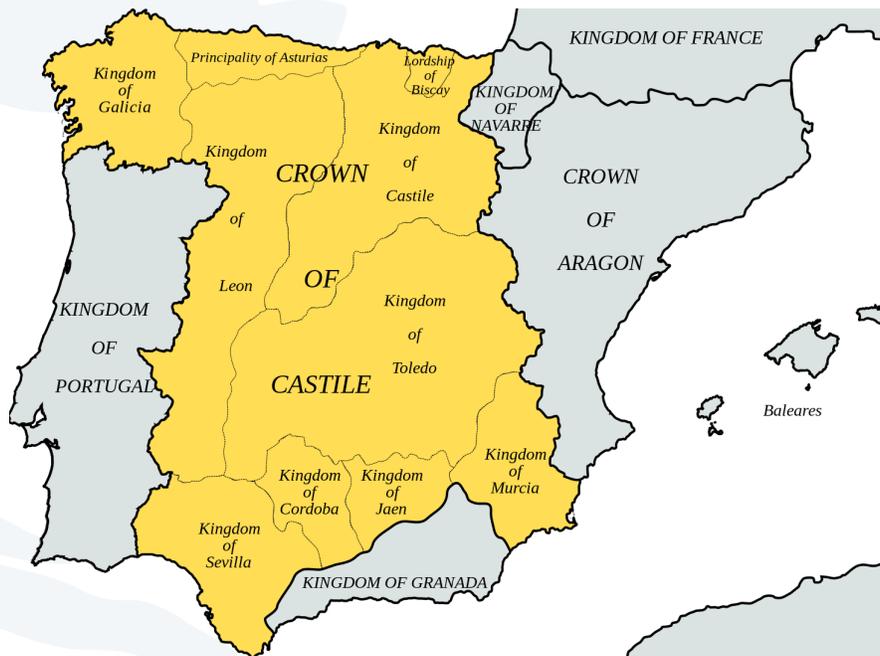
come to him and cry inconsolably.

In 1495 King John II died and King Manuel ascended to the throne. The situation of the Jews did not improve. He married the Spanish Princess Isabel, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabel, hoping to bring the entire peninsula under a single monarchy. The Spanish kings agreed to this marriage with one vicious condition: Manuel had to expel the Jews from Portugal. In December 4, 1496, Manuel stipulated that by November next year no Jew could reside in Portugal. Those who do not want to convert should abandon their possessions and leave the country. When Manuel saw that the Jews were willing to risk their lives and go, leaving everything behind instead of converting, he realized that the departure of the Jews would negatively affect the economy of Portugal, as was happening in Spain. He decided then to make a mass conversion “by decree.” In other words, instead of expelling the Jews from Portugal, he decided to expel the Judaism from the Jews, and declare all of them new Christians *de facto*.

There was a group of 20,000 Jews in Lisbon, including Rabbi Saba, desperately waiting for some boat that could take them out of Portugal. But the King ordered to forcibly baptize them and he said: “you can leave, if you wish, but your children are already

baptized, and they must remain here” The poor Jews had to choose between their children and their faith... These Yehudim were the bravest, those who fled Spain, leaving everything behind, to keep their faith intact...

Rabbi Saba was taken to prison. And there he saw the Chief Rabbi of Portugal, Ribbi Shimon Maimi (or Meimi) זצ"ל.¹ Rabbi Maimi, his wife, his daughters and his sons-in-law were tortured by the Inquisition, hoping to force them to convert, and thus serve as an example for the other Jews. But the elder Rabbi Maimi and all his family chose to suffer the terrible tortures, and died al *qiddush haShem* (sanctifying Gods name), rejecting conversion.



After spending six months in a prison, Rabbi Saba was sent with a group of Jews to the city of Arcila or Assilah, in Morocco, a fortified prison. After a few months, Rabbi Saba miraculously escaped and went to Fez, a city with a large Jewish community. It took a few

years for Rabbi Saba to recover from his physical and emotional deterioration. After a long convalescence, he became one of the Rabbis of the city, and began to rewrite his books.

Six of his books remained in Portugal, in manuscript form. Among them were: *Tseror haKesef*, a rabbinical responsa on issues related to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur; *Tseror haHayim*, a commentary on the treatise *Pirke 'Abot*; a commentary on the Psalms; a commentary on the Gemara *Berakhot*; and a Qabbalistic book in which he explained the ten *sefirot*.

Two of his books were printed. One of his most famous books, where the story I presented today appears, is *Tseror*

Hamor, a commentary on the Torah. He also wrote *Eshkol ha-Kofer*, a commentary on *Megillat Ruth* and *Megillat Esther*. These two are the only books of Rabbi Saba we have today.

From Fez, Rabbi Saba traveled to Adrianopoli (now the city of Edirne in Turkey). He died on the 9 Tishri 5269 (1508) on a boat. He was buried in the Jewish cemetery in

Verona, Italy.

The granddaughter of Rabbi Abraham Saba married Rabbi Yosef Caro, author of the *Shulhan 'Arukh*.

Rabbi Bitton is the rabbi of Ohel David U'shlomo.

¹ זכר צדיק לברכה, of blessed memory.



Student Corner

REMEMBERING EZRA SCHWARTZ A"H

Mr. Raymond Braha

I've been living in Israel for almost four months, and for most of my time here, the country has been struck by terror. Terrorist attacks have been happening daily across the country, but none affected my life more than the shooting at a junction in Gush Etzion on Thursday November 19th, when Ezra Schwartz was killed. As a yeshiva, we did our part in remembering Ezra. What follows is my reflection of the week that followed Ezra's murder.

On that Sunday night we gathered in the *beit midrash* at 6:45 to recite *Tehilim* as a yeshiva. Immediately following it, the lights went out and the projector was shining at the wall with an image of a busy room. A big busy room in Boston, Massachusetts. We watched as a rabbi stood up, and weepingly eulogized a member of his Jewish community who was killed in terrorist attack just a few days earlier. We were watching the funeral of Ezra Schwartz.

The entire yeshiva was sitting in the *beit midrash* watching. We watched the rabbi speak and heard him cry. We saw Ezra's father eulogize his son. We watched Ezra's mother eulogize her son. We watched Ezra's older sister eulogize her brother. We watched Ezra's three little brothers eulogize their big brother. We watched Ezra's grandparents eulogize their grandson. We watched Ezra's principal, his head of school, and his baseball coach eulogize their proud graduate of Maimonides. We watched a family friend of the Schwartz's, the father of a student in our yeshiva, eulogize his son's friend and his friend's son. We watched them weep. We heard them cry. We felt their pain.

During those two hours we got to know Ezra. We learned about Ezra's quirky sense of humor, his friendliness and strong

relationship with his family and friends, and his admiration for sports and his skills in them, especially baseball. I've never seen Ezra in my life, but now I feel like I know him.

After hearing story after story about Ezra, and after seeing the people who loved him cry and cry, the projector went black, and the room was completely dark. We started to sing, everyone sitting in their seats, together in a low, powerful voice.

אשא עיני אל ההרים, מאין יבוא עזרי, עזרי מעם ה' עושה שמים
וארץ

*I lift up my eyes to the mountains,
where does my help come from? My
help comes from Hashem, the maker
of heaven and earth.*

We sang it again. Getting louder with each word.

הנה לא ינום ולא ישן שומר ישראל
*See, the guardian of Israel neither
slumbers nor sleeps*

Our voices got louder and louder. Everyone in the room was singing their hearts out. The words were powerful. The spirit in the room was

growing and growing.

אחינו כל בית ישראל, הנתונים בצרה ובשביה, העומדים בין בים
ובין ביבשה

*Our brothers, the whole house of Israel, who are given over to
trouble or captivity, whether they abide on the sea or on the
dry land*

We all stood up and locked arms. We formed one large circle. We were singing for our brothers of Israel. Our family



"The Lone Oak" of Gush Etzion

suffering. We belted out as one.

המקום ירחם עליהם, ויוציאם מצרה לרווחה, ומאפלה לאורה
ומשבעוד לגאולה

*May the All-Present have mercy on them, and bring them
forth from trouble to enlargement, from darkness to light, and
from subjection to redemption*

השתא בעגלה ובזמן קריב

Now, speedily, and at a near time

We sang that verse over and over and over again. Until we stopped, and the room was silent.

The lights went on, and as I looked around the room I saw tears. Everyone had tears in their eyes. Everyone. Students, teachers, *madrcihs*, *kollel* guys. Tears. It didn't matter what you were doing here. It didn't matter where you came from. It didn't matter why you came to Israel. It didn't matter what has happened in your life recently. It didn't matter what you just ate for dinner. It didn't matter if your phone needed a charge. All that mattered was that we lost a brother, and everyone felt it.

Arbit followed. It was the most powerful prayer of my life, and I can imagine the same for most others. It was a prayer for Ezra Schwartz, may he rest in peace.

***“I was surrounded by a thousand of
my brothers and sisters, all gathered
to remember our lost brother.”***

Then, Thursday night rolled around. We left the yeshiva at 6 PM on a bus to Beit Shemesh for Ezra's *azkara*. We, along with countless other yeshivas and seminaries attended the *azkara*, put together by Yeshivat Ashreinu. We heard speeches from his rabbis, yeshiva friends, and friends from home. We heard statements from Rabbi Moshe Lichtenstein, Prime Minister Netanyahu, and Daniel Shapiro, the American ambassador to Israel. We heard a lot about Ezra. I don't remember everything that was said but it confirmed my belief that Ezra was a great guy to be around. Some boys from Ashreinu put on a musical performance and rapped a song they wrote about Ezra. You could see their emotions as they sang on stage.

They showed the moment of silence at the Patriots game Monday night, and immediately afterwards they showed a slideshow of pictures and videos of Ezra. Since I was sitting all

the way in the back, I stood up to watch the video. I saw Ezra as a child and as a teenager, having fun and being himself. And now he's gone. As tears clouded up my eyes, I began to feel a strong sense of loneliness. Standing there, deep in my own thoughts, watching the slideshow of Ezra's life. I was standing in silence surrounded by over a thousand people, but somehow, I felt like I was all by myself.

It was then that I looked forward and saw all of the people there. Over a thousand yeshiva and seminary students, rabbis, teachers, and others all gathered to remember Ezra Schwartz. I didn't know Ezra Schwartz. And neither did the vast majority of the people there. But they were there. Everyone there was impacted by his loss and felt the need to remember his life.

I no longer felt lonely. I was surrounded by a thousand of my brothers and sisters, all gathered to remember our lost brother. They were there for Ezra. And they would be there for any one of the children of Israel. At that moment I realized we are just one really large family. My feeling of loneliness immediately shifted into one of intense unity. Then, we all started to sing together. A thousand voices became one as we sang for our lost brother.

Ezra wanted to finish Tanakh during his year in Israel. Unfortunately, he didn't get the chance to complete his goal. But that night, we did it for him. Everyone was given a sheet

of a few chapters in Tanakh and we spent twenty minutes learning it. Everyone did their part and together, in one night, we finished Tanakh for Ezra. That was followed by a *siyum* for Tanakh in Ezra's memory. We danced together. We did what he didn't get the chance to do. We did it for him.

The night finished with *hatikva* and *arbit* as emotions were flying up and down. Our bus was headed back to Jerusalem, but with one stop before yeshiva. We were going to the wedding. Whose wedding? Here's the story: A couple of weeks ago Ariel Biegel and Sarah Litman were scheduled to get married. I say scheduled, because, unfortunately, her father and brother were killed in a terrorist attack the day before the wedding. So they pushed off the wedding. And in an awe inspiring decision, they

Continued on page 18

Continued from page 17

invited every Jew on the face of the planet to come to their wedding.

I'm not kidding when I say every Jew on the face of the planet. I heard of a group of 12 people from Montreal who flew to Israel just for this wedding, and there are more stories like this. I stood there looking around. Seeing all of the people there. Yeshiva and seminary students, sober and drunk. Adults old and young. Senior citizens married or alone. Hassidics, *haredis*, and *nahmanites* joined in the celebration, bringing a party of their own. Typical Israeli teenagers, you know the ones always smoking, wearing T-shirts and ripped jeans, religious or not, they were there. Army soldiers, security guards, everyone you could imagine. There were over 50,000 people at this wedding.

This wedding of people we didn't even know. I don't even know people who know them. And neither did 90% of the people there. Everyone danced with people they didn't know for the joyous occasion of people they didn't know. But you didn't have to know anyone. It didn't matter. That night we were one really really big family. One that goes back thousands of years. We share a common faith and culture which keeps us together. And on Thursday night, we were together.

Thursday night was special. Two unifying events of the Jewish people. Two events in direct response to terror attacks of anti-Semitism. They try. They've been trying for thousands of years. They want us gone. We inherit the profound ability to survive together as a people. We have done it for over four thousand years and we will continue to do so.

“when these acts of terror hurt, it only brings our people closer together. It breaks the immediate family, but it brings our extended family closer together.”

Thus, when these acts of terror hurt, it only brings our people closer together. It breaks the immediate family, but it brings our extended family closer together. It reminds us what it is to be a part of the family of Israel. The only family in history, where you can mourn the loss or celebrate

the *simha* of your brother or sister whom you've never met.

And these acts of terror will continue. For how long, I don't know. But one day they will stop. One day they will realize that we cannot be brought down. One day they'll learn. But until then, we will continue to suffer and celebrate together, as one really large and loving family.

Mr. Braha is a graduate of the Yeshivah of Flatbush and is currently studying for the year in Yeshivat Eretz Hatzvi in Jerusalem.

Special thanks to
Rabbi Haber and his family
for overseeing such a successful night,
and for having such dedication to our
Community's young adults

SCA FRIDAY NIGHT DINNER

Ms. Sarah Levy

On November 27th, the community's college-age students and young professionals were invited to partake in the first ever SCA Thanksgiving Friday Night Dinner. 80 guests gathered in Bnei Yitzhak for a night of food, fun, socializing, and intellectual conversation. The brainchild of Rabbi Moses Haber, the event was a definite success.

The shabbaton started off with *minha* and *qabbalat Shabbat*, followed by *qiddush* and a delicious meal prepared by Zami Caterers. Nina Esses, one of the event chairs, delivered a *Debar Torah* about the importance of appreciating what we have and prioritizing our values, tying in both Thanksgiving and Yaakov's declaration of "*yesh li qol* (I have everything)" from *perashat hashavuah*.

The real excitement of the evening came when the room was split into nine groups for a series of two discussions led by Rabbi Haber. The first of the two addressed something very close to home for us all, our very own Syrian community. Each group was challenged to come up with a way to "pitch" the Community to receive an imaginary \$100 million grant. This topic sparked lively debate as each table considered the definition of the Community, its core values, its greatest strengths, and its greatest weaknesses. The general consensus was that the Community's generosity, inclusiveness, and commitment to family and tradition are what make it thrive. A recurring idea was that the Community could benefit from embracing a more open-minded attitude. Also addressed were the tuition crisis and the rapid Community growth, big concerns of these future-minded young adults, who had no shortage of possible solutions.

As Rabbi Haber acknowledged, everyone in the room has at this point ventured beyond high school and the so-called "bubble" and has seen how other communities work. This gives us a greater appreciation for our own Community, but also helps us see how we can make ours better.

The second conversation took a decidedly more political turn, as each group was asked, in light of our common heritage as the children and grandchildren of Syrian immigrants, to consider whether the U.S. should indeed

take in 10,000 current Syrian refugees. Comparisons were drawn between the Syrian refugees of today and the Eastern European Jews turned away from the shores of America and (what was then) Palestine on the eve of the Holocaust. What effect does our religion, our history, and the media have on how we approach this decision? Opinions were varied and the debate heated. The young adults of the Community gave serious thought to pertinent issues and arrived at distinct opinions.

The last part of the night took on a more lighthearted mood, as politics was put aside in favor of games like "Anomia" and "Apples to Apples." As one participant said, "it's like Friday Night Lights, but with food and a higher level of thinking."

Bnei Yitzhak hosts "Friday Night Lights" once a semester, an event in which high schoolers from different schools around the Community can come together to play games and socialize. The SCA Friday Night Dinner was actually a direct offshoot of a different high school program, the "All-For-One Shabbaton," which (when it ran two years ago) brought young adults from eight different Community congregations together for Shabbat lunch and a panel discussion with Community Rabbis. Rabbi Haber came up with the idea to adapt this for 18 to 25 year olds a while ago, and the SCA gladly approved of it.

The Friday night of Thanksgiving is ideal, says Rabbi Haber, because everyone is in town, back from college, and has already had a chance to spend time with family Thursday night. It's a good opportunity to see friends. Hopefully, the Thanksgiving Friday Night Dinner will become an annual tradition.

Special thanks to Rabbi Haber (and his family) for overseeing such a successful night, and for having such dedication to our Community's young adults. Thanks also goes out to the event chairs, Michelle Catton, Teddy Chattah, Max Cohen, Saul Betesh, Victor Dweck, Nina Esses, and Celia Tawil. Be sure to look out for future SCA events they are planning.

Ms. Levy is an undergraduate at Princeton University.



Sephardic Pizmonim Project

MAQAM OF THE WEEK

www.pizmonim.com

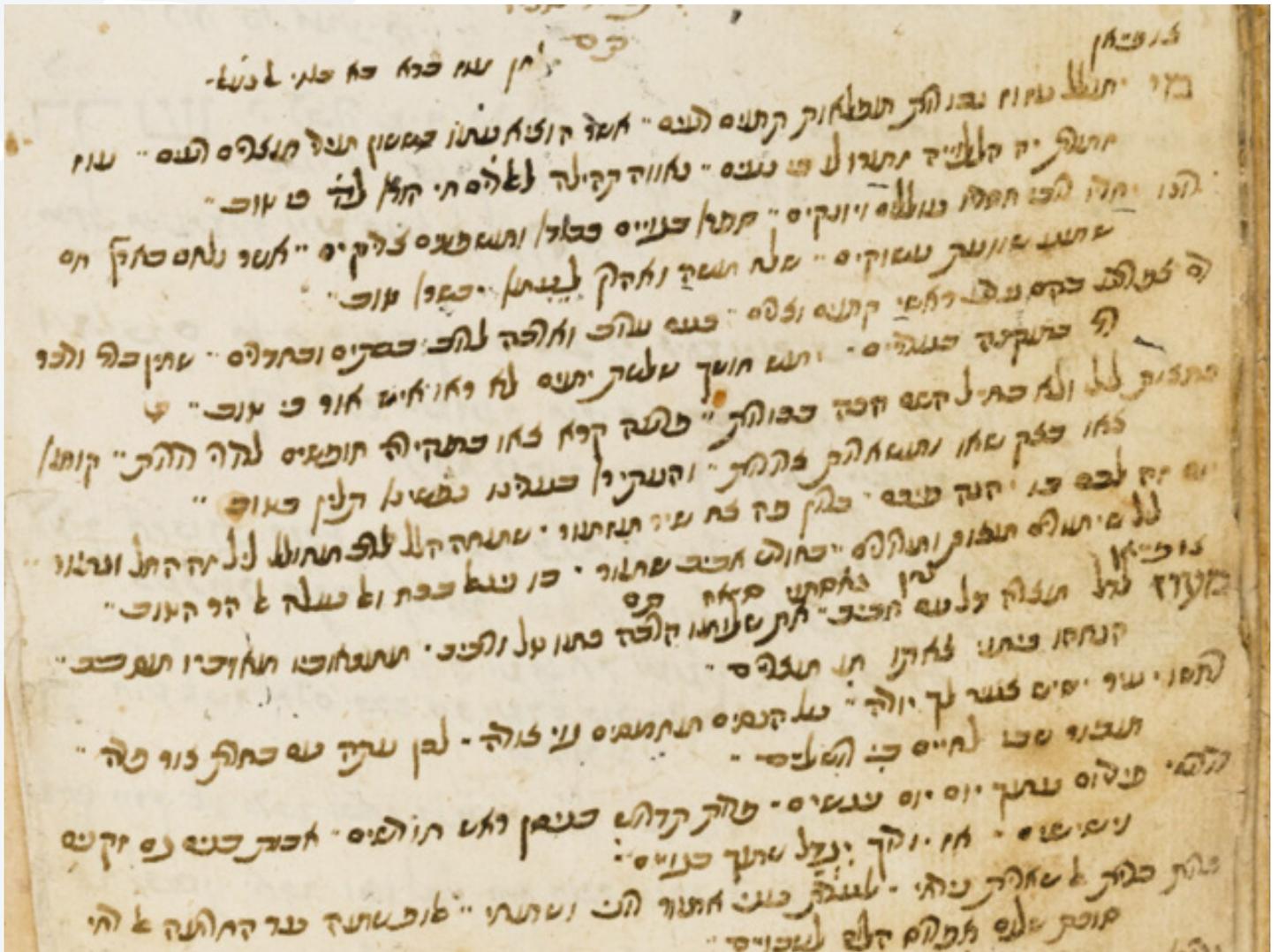
For **Shabbat Shemot**, the morning prayers are conducted in Maqam RAST or BAYAT according to most Syrian sources. Maqam RAST, derived from the Arabic word 'RAS' (head), is appropriate, because it is applied as we begin a new Humash. Maqam BAYAT is also an accepted option based on the narrative in the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

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

Sephardic Pizmonim Project, www.pizmonim.com

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וישמע קולי ויעזור לי ואל יפן למעללי	לו שועתי תעל ויסלה לי מעל יאזן לאמרי פי
וכלתו וצדקתו כשלמה במלכותו	יה הרם לחתן בזכות אב האיתן ותמלוך המלכה רחל

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Sephardic History

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נונכה אולבידיס מואיסטרה איסטוריה דיסטינגידה

Mr. Sheldon N. Goldman

Chapter 13: Fall of the Omayyads

Abdallah faced Umar b. Hafsun in battle in 891 and defeated him. Hafsun came back the following year, had some success, but his future was checked as a Muslim. He therefore decided to formally convert to Catholicism. The Muslims were incensed and they declared a jihad against him. Hafsun tried to bring about a class war between the haves and have-nots. He supported the serfs and farm workers telling them not to pay the landlords their rent. The ordinary people were drawn to him. The Jews continued to support the king for three reasons: they felt a strong king would be able to protect the Jews; Hafsun, now a Christian and leading Christian forces reminded the Jews how badly they were treated by the Christians in the north; and economically the Jews were being hurt by the class divisions Hafsun encouraged.

Jews were involved in agriculture, in manufacturing and as merchants, and the policies of Hafsun were harmful to them. Lucena, was in the southern part of Spain in the Andalusia area between Seville and Granada and was mostly populated by Jews. Hafsun was successful in capturing Andalusian cities and he now desired to capture Lucena. The city was protected by a wall. Hafsun tried a surprise attack against the city which failed. His troops used slings, arrows and rams. The Jews fought back with stone, fire, and wooden beams. The crisscrossing of the wooden beams were effective against the rams. Under cover of night, Hafsun packed up his troops and left. Some weeks later he was severely beaten by Abdallah.

Jews continued to migrate to Spain because of the inviting conditions but the many conflicts raised the need for money and the tax demands began to grow extensively. As a result Jews began to migrate out of this area to

North Africa and Italy. As new communities were being developed in the Christian areas of Asturias and Castille in the north, some of the Jews were attracted to them and they began to return. The Christians were hostile to Jews, but when there was a need for merchants, manufacturers and craftsmen, adventurous Jews took their chances and migrated to those areas. Little by little, more and more Jewish communities began to develop in Christian Spain during the ninth and tenth centuries.

Thus far we have learned about the “people” of Spain, the Muslims, the Jews and the Christians. We now turn to the land and in particular Cordova, the heart and soul of the “Jewish Golden Age.” Abd ar-Rahman I had chosen Cordova as the capital of the Omayyad Caliphate in Spain in 756. By the 900s it had grown to well over a hundred thousand people. As Jane Gerber points out in her book:

It boasted 700 mosques and perhaps as many as 3,000 public baths within the city limits, paved and illuminated streets, indoor plumbing in luxurious homes, and countless villas dotting the banks of the Guadalquivir. The air was filled with the humming of 5,000 looms weaving silk and brocades, with the cascading of waters over the brightly colored ceramic-tiled basins of its innumerable fountains and reflecting pools...Cordova’s sparkling cultural life was enriched by seventy libraries with the caliph’s library alone reportedly stocking 400,000 volumes. Recognized as a center of medicine and technology, the city also housed numerous observatories.¹

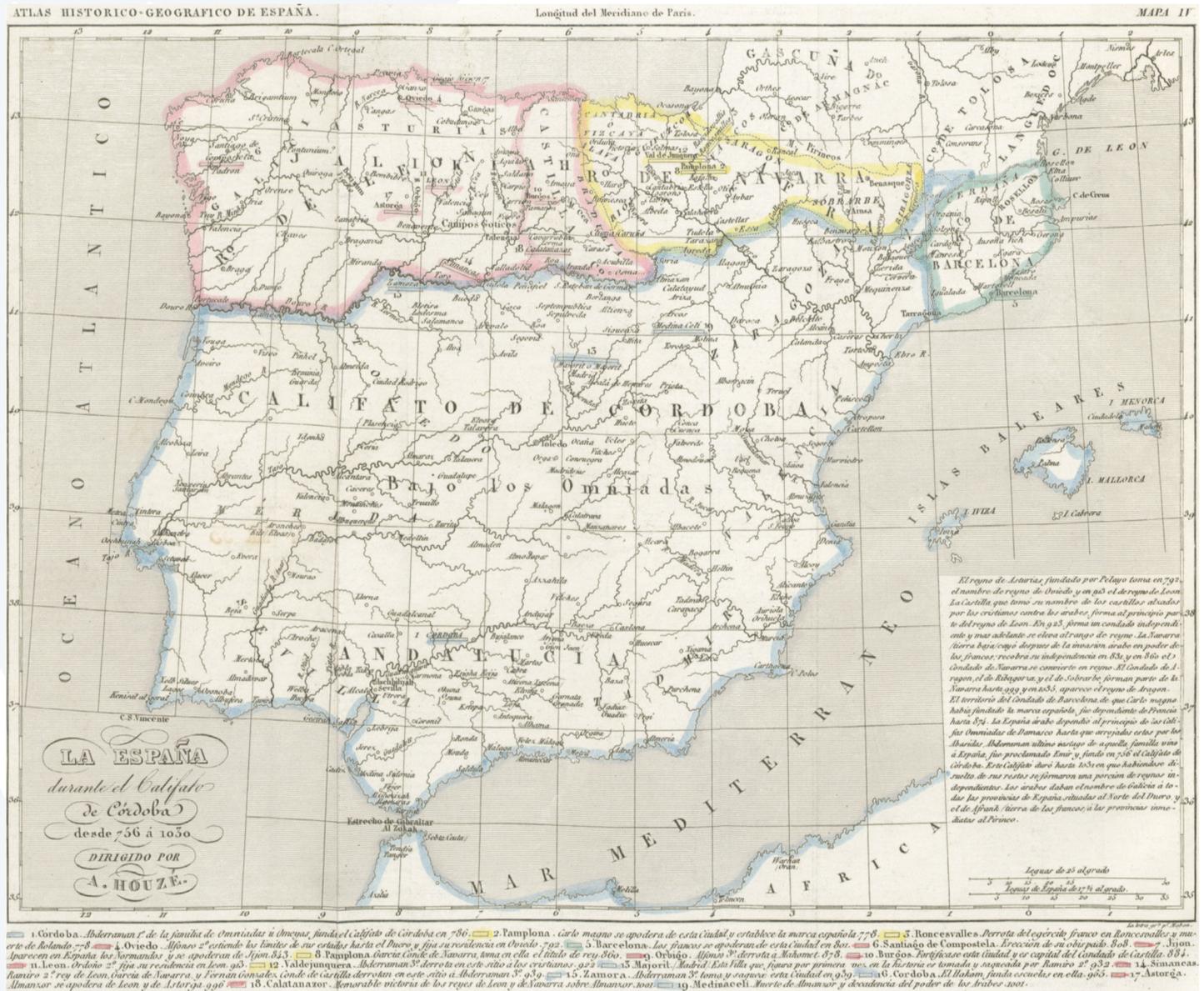
As was pointed out previously, Abd ar-Rahman I

¹ Jane Gerber, *The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994) p. 28-29.

proclaimed the establishment of the Spanish Omayyad kingdom in 756 from the Great Mosque of Cordova. The structure was a superb example of Moorish architecture. The exterior was cinnamon colored. Its interior ceiling was built from superbly carved wood; its doors, enamel and gold; and its walls of beautiful tile work. It was lit by thousands of beautiful oil lamps. Its walls were decorated by ornate and attractive Arabic calligraphy. The Jews used this structure as a model for their beautiful synagogues. Business life in Cordova was prosperous for all of its participants. It excelled in agriculture, manufacture, mining and world trade. Some of the crops it grew were almonds, citrus fruits, bananas, figs, cotton, silk, flax and wool.

They developed industries in lead crystal, leather, silk and ceramics. In addition there was the manufacturing of clothing and wine, as well as the mining of sulfur and marble.

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



Historical Geographic Atlas of Spain, 756-1030



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