

PARASHAT SHEMOT

The Burning Bush

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SEC Jerusalem*

There is something very profound in the symbols that we choose. Companies spend countless hours, not to mention money, in developing the perfect logo that will appeal to customers and remain imbedded in their minds. Countries think carefully before choosing the images that will be part of their flags. Symbols may be superficial, but they carry meaning that sometimes transcends time and place. Judaism is no different. Jewish tradition is filled with symbols that identify us as a nation and have helped preserve our identities as Jews.

One of the most powerful Jewish symbols can be found in this week's Torah portion of "Shemot". When one sees a picture of the "Burning Bush" there is no mistake that they are in a Jewish place. I can remember my congregation in Vancouver, Canada where the symbol of the "Parokhet" (curtains on the ark), was not a tree of life or a Torah crown, but a beautiful weaving of the "Burning

Bush". Today I would like to explore the significance of the "Burning Bush". Why did G-d choose it as "the symbol" by which to be revealed to Moses for the first time? Of what significance is it that the bush burned but could not be consumed?

A close reading of the text reveals a number of questions. The story begins with Moses, after having escaped from Egypt, tending to the flocks of Jethro his father in law. He comes to a mountain in the wilderness and then we are told the following, "And an angel of G-d appeared to him in a flame from within the bush" (Shemot 3:2). One would think that at this point G-d would begin to communicate with Moses. After all an angel of G-d has appeared, the time is perfect for conversation. Yet not only is there no conversation between Moses and G-d, the text continues and states, "And he saw that the bush was on fire yet it was not being consumed. And Moses said let me come close and see this wondrous site why the bush burns yet is not consumed" (Shemot 3:3). It is only after Moses comes near and inspects the bush that G-d begins to speak to him.

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Prayer Schedule

SHABBAT

PARASHAT SHEMOT

Friday, January 8th

Minhah & Arbit 4:40 pm
Candle Lighting 4:42 pm

Saturday, January 9th

Shaharit 8:30 am
Minhah & Arbit 4:15 pm
Motzei Shabbat 5:46 pm

WEEKDAYS

Sunday, January 10th

Shaharit 7:30 am

Talmud Torah

Bar Mitzvah Class 8:30 am
Bat Mitzvah Class 8:30 am
Regular Classes 9:30 am

Mon.-Thurs., Jan. 11-14

Shaharit 6:30 am

EREV SHABBAT & ROSH HODESH SHEVAT PARASHAT VA'ERA

Friday, January 15th

Minhah & Arbit 4:45 pm
Candle Lighting 4:48 pm

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Once Moses nears we are told, "And when G-d saw that Moses approached, G-d called out to him and said Moses, Moses, and he responded I am here. And G-d said do not come any closer, remove the shoes that are on your feet for the place that you are standing on is a holy place" (Shemot3:4-5).

Why is it that only after Moses comes closer to inspect the bush that G-d speaks to him? In addition why is it that once G-d has Moses attention, the very first thing he commands him to do is remove his shoes? What is the significance of removing ones shoes in a holy place?

The Midrash gives countless explanations to the symbolism of the "Burning Bush". I would like to share one of the answers that have great relevance to the times we live in. Our Rabbis in Midrash Raba state the following, "Why did G-d appear to Moses through the bush? Because G-d began to speak with Moses but he was occupied with his work and would not rest from it. Therefore G-d showed him the wondrous sight (of the bush) so that he would attract his attention to it and then he could speak to him. This is what we see as it is written 'and an angel of G-d

appeared to him', and yet Moses did not pay attention. But once Moses ceased his work and turned to see then immediately G-d spoke to him" (Midrash Raba 2).

The Midrash suggests that the Bush was a ploy to get Moses attention. Moses was busy tending the sheep and as a result of being so consumed by his work he was unable to see the amazing event that was unfolding before his very eyes. Only when Moses was willing to stop working for a few moments could G-d appear to him. In those few moments a new world would unravel before Moses and change his life forever. He would go from tending the sheep of Yitro to tending the sheep of G-d. From that moment on he would make sure that work would never get in the way of spiritual opportunities.

I think the significance of this message is vital for us. Work has consumed us. We are a generation driven by work and by the material benefits it affords us. Yet more than anything we are a generation that is craving spirituality. But to live more spiritual lives we must be willing to take a break from our hectic work schedules. Judaism affords us special moments to stand before G-d. It is up to us

to seize those moments by clearing our schedules. Once a week we can tap into the treasures that Shabbat can give us, but unless we are able to "stop", as the word "Shabbat" implies, we will not be able to tap into the spirituality of Shabbat.

At the "Burning Bush" G-d tells Moses to stop working for just a moment; G-d tells Moses to shed aside the burdens of his heavy schedule, so that he can show him something much greater. G-d is teaching us that in order to tap into the spiritual we must sometimes be willing to shed some of the material. As a colleague of mine once said, "you can't be in the synagogue and in the office at the same time".

Perhaps this is also the significance of why the very first directive given to Moses is to remove his shoes. The word used by the Torah telling Moses to remove his shoes is not the standard "*Torid*" which means to remove, but "*Shal*" which means "to shed". Why would the Torah not use the standard word of "*Torid*"? Perhaps it is to teach us that to tap into the spiritual we must be willing to shed some of the material. By asking Moses to "shed" his shoes, G-d was implying that only by shedding some of the material can we experience holiness.

It is interesting that the "*Kohanim*" served in the

temple barefoot. This was true during the warm summer months as well as the cold winter months. Why was it necessary to serve barefoot in the Temple? Because the Temple represented the highest spiritual experience. It was the house of G-d. To serve G-d and to enter into his home requires the shedding of the material. For us who live in such a busy world the message is an important one. Many of us spend more time in our offices than we do in our homes (and in the synagogue). But to live a Jewish life and certainly a spiritual life requires us to clear our schedules. It means setting aside time to pray, welcoming Shabbat every week, and penciling in time to study. The story of the "Burning Bush" teaches us that if we are not careful then amazing events can take place around us, but because we are so distracted they pass us by.

Shabbat Shalom

Parasha & Haftara

Parashat *Shemot*
pages 206 - 224

Haftara
from *Yirmiyahu*
pages 229 - 232

In Memoriam

It is customary to light a memorial candle in the evening and donate tzedakah. Family members are encouraged to attend services in honor of their loved ones.

Shabbat / 23 Tevet
Kovkah bat Yaakov
HaCohen
Hannah Dallal
Pinchas ben Nissan

Sunday / 24 Tevet
Moshe Hai ben Avraham
Louise Jacob
Sulman ben Yosef Sheeri
Shather Shokri

Tuesday / 26 Tevet
Ronnie ben Naji Assia

Wednesday / 27 Tevet
Sassoon Elias
Stanley ben Jesse Feinberg

Thursday / 28 Tevet
Aziza bat Amam

Shabbat / 1 Shevat
Mozly bat Haviva

Yahrzeit names with asterisks are missing contact phone numbers and addresses for family members. To update the database, please call the office at 310.474.0559.

Community News

SHABBAT KIDDUSH

is co-sponsored

in memory of

Shather Shokri, z”l

mother of

Hanina Mathalon & Jacob Helali

SHABBAT KIDDUSH

is co-sponsored

in memory of

Ronnie Assia, z”l

by Claire & Naji Assia

and Family

Announcements

Haftara Readers

Wouldn't you like to chant from the Torah? Reserve your haftara portion at 310.474.0559. Then, schedule time with Saeed & learn your haftara with authentic Baghdadi ta'amim, Iraqi melodies for Torah reading.

Refuah Shlemah

Please include these individuals in your prayers for healing:

Yonatan ben Alizah ▪ Mazal Tov bat Sulha Mitana ▪ Matilda Louisa ▪ Yaheskel ben Regina ▪ Ayala bat Naomi ▪ Khayah Noa bat Sara ▪ Haim ben Mordechai ▪ Pnina bat Esther ▪ Yosi ben Esther ▪ Victor ben Latif ▪ Ramah Regina bat Farha ▪ Aziza bat Sara

Kahal Joseph Congregation's Tu B'Shvat Celebration

Join us when Tu B'Shvat takes place on Shabbat Shirah, Parashat Be'Shalakh, on Friday night January 29th and Saturday, January 30th, 2010.

We will share a Shabbat Community Dinner and Tu B'Shvat Celebration with special blessings, songs, and good food.

We invite you as the entire Kahal Joseph family comes together in a warm atmosphere, honors Shabbat, and participate in the spirituality of the Tu B'Shvat Seder.

Friday & Saturday, January 29-30, 2010

A Song for Shabbat: *El Galil*

View it at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DCRtTSnXyio>

לחן: יא גמיל יא גמיל

מלים: ר' יצחק סונה הי"ד

אָל גָּלִיל אֶל גָּלִיל אֶל גָּלִיל. אֲשֶׁר־יָד אֶרֶץ הַגָּלִיל. כְּמָהָה
נִפְשֵׁי לָךְ הַגָּלִיל. אֶל גְּדוּלֶיךָ צְדִיקִים. אֶל קְדוּשְׁתְּךָ
תְּמִימִים. מִגֵּן צִנָּה הֵם עַל אֲחִים. חַיִּים הֵם בְּתוֹכֵנוּ. מְרוּיָם
אֶת צְמֵאוֹנֵנוּ:

עֲרֵךְ שְׁלַחֵן לְעַמִּי. יוֹסֵף הוּא נֹר תִּפְאַרְתִּי. חֲדָשׁ הַכִּין הַצִּפְתִּי.
בְּנֻכּוֹתוֹ עֲמַד עוֹלָם. מְרוֹמָם הוּא מִבְּלָם. נְסִים עָשָׂה לִי
בְּנֻכּוֹת אֱהוּיב:

שִׁמְחָה לְעַם בְּשִׁירֵיו. לְכֹה הוֹדִי לִירְאֵיו. תִּקַּן שְׁלֹמֹה בְּעַמּוּיוֹ:
בְּנֻכּוֹתוֹ

עֲלָה אֲרִי וְגוּרֵיו. מוֹשֶׁה דִּרְשָׁן וְעֵנִי. אֲשֶׁר־י הַדּוֹר הַזֶּה פָּנְיוֹ:
בְּנֻכּוֹתוֹ

Children's Siddurim

*A Sponsorship Opportunity
In Honor of a Child in Your Life*

As you know, Kahal has a beautiful children's program, including T'filah and Kiddush, every Shabbat. To support this program, we have ordered a limited number of siddurim specifically for the children to use. These are child friendly books with large font and pictures; those of you with kids in Talmud Torah or who have participated in the program (in the small shul upstairs) have probably seen older copies. We are making new siddurim available for dedication in the name of your children and grandchildren on a first come, first serve basis at \$26 per dedication. It would be a wonderful surprise for your child/grandchild! Please contact Molly Jalali with your dedication information as soon as possible to reserve your siddur at molly@kahaljoseph.org.



Parasha of the Week for Winter 2010
Decoding the Torah Portion
Tuesdays at 7 pm with Rabbi Batzri

Learn the weekly Torah portion at KJ! Explore the secrets, paradoxes, and mysteries of the section of Torah read on Shabbat and deepen the meaning of every day. Familiarize yourself with the knowledge handed down from our forefathers beginning with Avraham.

Calling All Purim Carnival Sponsors

Purim arrives early this year! Our Purim Carnival takes place Sunday, February 21, 2010. We are inviting all sponsors to send in their contributions as soon as possible. Game Booths are available for \$500 per booth and the cost can be divided among two or three sponsors. For information contact Molly at molly@kahaljoseph.org

MITZVOT ON SHABBAT

We now offer for donation the following Mitzvot on Shabbat:

1. **Petichat Hechal** The opening of the ark where the Torahs are kept.
2. **Carrying of the Sefer Torah and Sefer Haftara**
3. **Hakamat Sefer** The lifting and showing of the Torah.
4. **Mashlim*** The seventh aliya to the Torah who recites Kaddish
5. **Maftir*** The last aliya to the Torah which includes the reading of the Haftara (which will be read by one of the clergy unless member reading has been previously approved)



Since we count on your donations to the synagogue to keep our membership fees as low as they are, we suggest a minimum donation for all those who are called to the Torah of \$126 or multiples of \$18 or \$26. We appreciate your support. *Paid members may call the office to book the Mashlim or Maftir in advance, in memory of a departed relative. You will receive confirmation before Shabbat if you will receive the aliya or if there is a conflict. The member may also reserve any other aliya in advance by calling the office. Non-members who are interested in aliyot should contact Sarah in the office to determine availability. Please call 310.474.0559 between the hours of 11:00 am and 4:00 pm, Monday through Thursday.