

24 Iyar 5770

8 May 2010

BEHAR-BEHUKOTAI

KOILMEVASSER

KAHAL JOSEPH CONGREGATION • 10505 SANTA MONICA BOULEVARD, LOS ANGELES, CA 90025 • 310.474.0559 • WWW.KAHALJOSEPH.COM

Lag Ba'Omer's Musical Journey at Kahal

By Moussa Shaaya

At their performance on Lag Ba'Omer, May 2nd, Yuval Ron, his ensemble of musicians and Rabbi Hagay Batzri enthralled guests at Kahal Joseph.

The audience sang, hummed, and clapped to the melodic chanting of our Rabbi Batzri and thoroughly enjoyed the virtuosity of the Yuval Ron Ensemble—especially the violinist, George Hamad, and drummer, Jamie Papish.

The event began with a candle lighting ceremony honoring Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, author of the Zohar, whose *yahrzeit* is celebrated on Lag Ba'Omer. The night continued with story telling and songs from countries across the Levant and Middle East.

The congregation celebrated Jewish culture and musical heritage, which we have developed via our sojourn amongst myriad nations. The program of songs, regardless of their place of origin, reflected our



unique intellectual and spiritual tradition, our Jewish oral and written history, and our religious life and values that have shaped innumerable Sephardic generations from Spain to Baghdad to Tehran and Jerusalem, and have, indeed, influenced the majority of people in the modern world.

These musical travels ended, appropriately, in the holy city of Jerusalem, with the entire community singing *Shabekhi Yerushalayem* with melodies indigenous to the Old City for centuries and even millenia. As one concert-goer commented, the evening became an experience in *Kiddush Hashem*, blessing & sanctifying the divine name of G-d.

Prayer Schedule

SHABBAT

BEHAR-BEHUKOTAI

Friday, May 7th

Minhah & Arbit 7:00 pm

Candle Lighting 7:23 pm

Saturday, May 8th

Shaharit 8:30 am

Women's Tehillim 5:45 pm

Minhah & Arbit 6:45 pm

Motzei Shabbat 8:27 pm

WEEKDAYS

Sunday, May 9th

Shaharit 7:30 am

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Class 8:30 am

Talmud Torah Classes 9:30 am

Mon.-Thurs., May 10-13

Shaharit 6:30 am

YOM YERUSHALAYIM

Wednesday, May 12th

PARASHAT BAMIDBAR

ROSH HODESH SIVAN

Friday, May 14th

Minhah & Arbit 7:00 pm

Candle Lighting 7:28 pm

Empathy and Not Sympathy

Rabbi Yosef Benaroch
SEC Jerusalem

One of the strangest commandments in the Torah can be found in this week's Torah portion of "*Behar/Behukotai*". The Torah commands us regarding the "Sabbatical Year" known as "*Shemittah*". Every seven years a farmer was commanded to refrain from working his fields. Of course he was permitted to perform activities to upkeep his land, but any activity to improve the land such as plowing, planting, pruning and similar activities were forbidden. The land was to lay fallow for the entire seventh year. In addition the farmer was not allowed to sell the produce of the seventh year. He was obligated to open his gates and allow any person to enter his fields and eat to their hearts desire, and free of charge to boot.

At first glance the commandment seems to be quite illogical. Imagine in today's world a farmer or a businessman would be told to put their entire business on hold for an entire year. Imagine telling a businessman that they would not be permitted to do anything that could cause improve-

ment to their business. Who would agree to such conditions? It would spell financial ruin. Yet this is precisely what the Torah commands every farmer to do every seven years.

This commandment also occupies quite an important place in the hierarchy of the Torah's commandments. In fact the punishment for not observing the "Sabbatical Year" was quite harsh. In *Pirkei Avot* (Ethics of our Fathers) it states the following, "*Exile comes to the world for the transgressions of idolatry, adultery, bloodshed, and working the land on the Sabbatical year*" (*Pirkei Avot 5:11*). From this statement it is clear that this is a very important commandment. The Rabbinic clump it together with the three cardinal sins of Judaism.

What is the value of the Sabbatical year? What message was the Torah trying to convey through this seemingly illogical commandment? There are many explanations given in the commentaries. Many of the commentaries suggest that the command was in order to create social justice. The Torah wanted to make sure that the weak and less fortunate be taken care of. Maimonides in his "Guide to the Perplexed" (3:39) explains by allowing the land to lay fallow and allowing the poor to enter and eat from the fields, the Torah was

protecting the rights of the weak.

But if the Sabbatical year was instituted in order to take care of the poor, then how does it differ from all the other laws mentioned in the Torah that have to do with taking care of the poor? Aren't there enough laws that make sure the poor are taken care of? The Torah already mentions the obligation to give charity, in addition there are laws that obligated farmers to set aside a part of their fields to allow the poor to enter and take produce free of charge. These are just a few examples of how the Torah protects the poor and the weak. What then does the Sabbatical year add to caring for the poor that the other laws of the Torah don't?

To answer this question we must understand why the Torah commands the Sabbatical year in the first place. What is the reasoning behind this strange law? Rabbi Nevenzhal the Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem's Old City writes the following, "*The Sabbatical year comes in order to educate us about the life of the poor. Every seventh year the rich and powerful themselves become devoid of possessions and economic power, and become the same as the simplest of the nation... Perhaps we can explain that the Torah*

expects us to know the predicament of the stranger because we were strangers ourselves in Egypt. In other words the situation that we ourselves experienced allowed us to know how the stranger felt. So too the Torah commands us to observe the Sabbatical year so that through this experience we will know how the poor feel so that during this year we will open our hearts and have compassion for the poor who have nothing" (*Essays on Vayikra Rabbi Nevenzhal Parashat Behar*).

The Sabbatical year does for the poor what no other law of charity does. It not only allows us to intellectually understand that we are obligated to help the poor; it puts us into the poor person's shoes. It strips us of all that we own so that we will be able to not only feel sympathy for the poor but empathize with them. For one year we are all the same, we all own nothing, our fields and everything we own belong to everyone. The Sabbatical year levels out the playing field by letting us feel first hand what it feels to own nothing.

I am reminded of a story that is told about a small town that was hit by an exceptionally cold winter. To make things worse there was a shortage of wood for the fireplaces and so the poor people of

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In Memoriam

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

Shabbat / 24 Iyar

Yehuda Faraj ben Yosef Bekhore*

Sunday / 25 Iyar

Simkha Nazarian bat Michael*

Monday / 26 Iyar

Sarah Elias bat Ester*

Tuesday / 27 Iyar

Sassoon Yoseph Elisha

Wednesday / 28 Iyar

Joseph Hai Ezra Shimon
Hannah Khatoon bat Mozelle Tov

Friday / 1 Sivan

Ezra Shalom Avraham

*Names with asterisks are missing family members' information.
To update, call 310.474.0559.*



Learn to Read the Haftarah

Wouldn't you like to chant from the concluding section of the Torah read on every Shabbat—the Haftarah? Reserve a haftarah portion at 310.474.0559. Then, schedule time with Saeed & learn your haftarah with authentic Baghdadi ta'amim, our Iraqi melodies for Torah reading.

Parasha & Haftara Behar Behukotai

Parasha pages 531-550

Haftara pages 551-553

Community News

SEUDAH SHLISHEET

is sponsored by
David Davoudian
and his family

in memory of
his brother
Yehezkel ben David, z"l

CONDOLENCES

to the family of
Rosalind Gurwitz, z"l

niece of Saul Levi and also of
Rabbi Elias Levi, z"l; cousin to
Michelle Levi-Kurtzl, daughter of
Simon Levi, z"l, & Florence Levi

Rosalind is survived by her husband
Al Gurwitz, her children
Sherry, Carrie and Brian, and six
grandchildren

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 • Merna bat Marsel •
Judith bat Malka • Ofek ben Yochai
• Efrayim Zev ben Fayga • Sulha
Matana bat Mozelle

CONDOLENCES

to the family of
Iran Rojhani, z"l

mother of Sholeh (Moussa)
Shaaya, Touraj (Hilda) Rojhani,
Ira Rojhani, Ziba Akhavan,
Manijeh Makabi, Minoo Helali,
Sohrab Rojhani, & Zohreh Levian

Grandmother of
Selena (Moshe) Dallal &
Denise (Hoomand) Farahmand

Our condolences go out to her
children, all of her grandchildren,
and her entire family.

To Sponsor A

Shabbat Kiddush or a Seudah Shlisheet

In honor of a loved one or a happy
occasion, please call our office and
speak with Sarah between the hours
of 10 am and 4 pm, Monday through
Thursday at 310.474.0559.

To Publish a Notice in the Kol Mevasser

If you have information regarding
life events such as births, bar/bat
mitzvahs, graduations, weddings,
anniversaries or passings, please call
the synagogue office at 310.474.0559
and she will ensure that the information
reaches our editor, Dafna. Please
note that notices must be received by
noon on Wednesday to ensure
inclusion in that week's issue.

(Continued from page 2)

the village had no way to stay warm. The Rabbi of the town decided that the only way to save the situation was to visit the wealthiest man in town who had managed to buy a substantial amount of firewood. The Rabbi went to his house and knocked on the door. The wealthy man was surprised to see the Rabbi at his doorstep on such an exceptionally cold day. He invited the Rabbi in but the Rabbi remained at the door and began to ask the man how his wife and children were. The man answered quickly and again invited the Rabbi in; instead the Rabbi remained at the door and asked more questions about the mans wellbeing. Shivering from the cold the man finally turned to the Rabbi and asked him what the purpose of his visit was. The Rabbi went on to tell the man that he had come because of the shortage of firewood and that as the wealthiest man of the town he needed and very kind donation. The man agreed and supplied the entire town with wood to stay warm. Curious the man turned to the Rabbi and asked why he couldn't have communicated the same message inside his warm home. The Rabbi replied that he wanted first and foremost that the poor man feel the same cold that the poor were feeling. Only then would he be able to open his heart and give what the poor so rightfully needed.

The idea of being ownerless for one year has an added significance. How beautiful are the words of *Rabbenu Behaye* (14th century Saragossa Spain) who explains that the purpose of the "Sabbatical Year" is to remove all human rule and mastery from the world. On the seventh year we are no longer the owners of our land, we are no longer the masters. On the seventh year we must acknowledge that everything belongs to G-d, and that he is the master. It is for this reason that the "Sabbatical Year" is called Shabbat. The two are in many ways related one to another. On Shabbat we are given the opportunity to once a week recognize G-d as the master. By resting from all man made creations we are able to thank the true creator.

In the end both the "Sabbatical Year" and the Shabbat come to free us from "Things". Whether it is our land, our houses, our cell phones, our cars, or our computers (to name just a few), we have become so connected to "Things". They have tragically become the focal point of our lives. What's worse is that we have convinced ourselves that without them we simply can't live. We serve them more and more and as a result we serve G-d less and less. The "Sabbatical Year" and Shabbat are the Torah's attempt to free us of "Things" so that we can dedicate ourselves to the one "Thing" that really matters, which is the service of G-d.

Shabbat Shalom

Women's Shabbat Tehillim Group

Come and recite the Tehillim together on Shabbat afternoon, one hour before Mincha. These poems are also known as the Psalms, and are traditionally said in support of those ill or sick in our community.

May 8, 2010 at 5:45 pm
KJ Upstairs Library

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 the clergy unless member reading has been preapproved)

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 interested in aliyot should contact Sarah in the office for availability at 310.474.0559, 11 am to 4 pm, Monday to Thursday.