

KOIL MEVASSER

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

A Crisis of Leadership

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks
Chief Rabbi Great Britain

Ki Tissa tells of one of the most shocking moments of the forty years in the wilderness when – less than six weeks after the greatest revelation in the history of religion, Israel's encounter with God at Mount Sinai – they made a golden calf. Either this was idolatry, or perilously close to it, and it caused God to say to Moses, who was with him on the mountain, "Now do not try to stop Me when I unleash my wrath against them to destroy them" (32: 10).

What I want to look at here is the role played by Aaron, for it was he who was the de facto leader of the people in the absence of Moses, and he whom the Israelites approached with their proposal:

The people began to realize that Moses was taking a long time to come down from the mountain. They gathered around Aaron and said to him, 'Make us a god [or an oracle] to lead us. We have no idea what happened to Moses, the man who brought us out of Egypt.' (32: 1)



It was Aaron who should have seen the danger, Aaron who should have stopped them, Aaron who should have told them to wait, have patience and trust. Instead this is what happened:

Aaron answered them, "Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me." So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. He took what they handed him and fashioned it with a graving tool, and made it a molten calf. Then they said, "This, Israel, is your god, who brought you out of Egypt." When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, "Tomorrow there will be a festival to the Lord." So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented peace offerings. Afterward they sat

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Prayer Schedule

SHABBAT

PARASHAT KI TISSA

Friday, February 18th

Minhah & Arbit 5:15 pm

Candle Lighting 5:21 pm

Hassidic Tish w/ Rabbi Ashlag
5:30 pm

Saturday, February 19th

Shaharit 8:30 am

Shabbat Lunch and Learn

with Rabbi Ashlag

following morning services

Tehillim before Minhah

Minhah & Arbit 5:00 pm

Motzei Shabbat 6:25 pm

WEEKDAYS

Sunday, February 20th

Shaharit 7:30 am

Monday to Friday

Shaharit 6:30 am

TALMUD TORAH CLASSES

Tuesday & Thursday 4:00 pm

EREV SHABBAT

PARASHAT VAYAKHEL

Friday, February 25th

Minhah & Arbit 5:15 pm

with Scholar in Residence

Rabbi Moshe Tessone

Candle Lighting 5:27 pm

Please confirm daily prayer

times with minyan leaders.

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down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry. (32: 2-6)

The Torah itself seems to blame Aaron, if not for what he did then at least for what he allowed to happen:

Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies. (32: 25)

Now Aaron was not an insignificant figure. He had shared the burden of leadership with Moses. He had either already become or was about to be appointed High Priest. What then was in his mind while this drama was being enacted?

Essentially there are three lines of defence in the Midrash, the Zohar and the medieval commentators. According to the first, Aaron was playing for time. His actions were a series of delaying tactics. He told the people to take the gold earrings their wives, sons and daughters were wearing, reasoning to himself: "While they are quarrelling with their children and wives about the gold, there will be a delay and Moses will come" (Zohar). His instructions to build an altar and proclaim a festival to God the next day were like-

wise intended to buy time, for Aaron was convinced that Moses was on his way.

The second defence is to be found in the Talmud and is based on the fact that when Moses departed to ascend the mountain he left not just Aaron but also Hur in charge of the people (Ex. 24: 14). Yet Hur does not figure in the narrative of the golden calf. According to the Talmud, Hur had opposed the people, telling them that what they were about to do was wrong, and was then killed by them. Aaron saw this and decided that proceeding with the making of the calf was the lesser of two evils:

Aaron saw Hur lying slain before him and said to himself: If I do not obey them, they will do to me what they did to Hur, and so will be fulfilled [the fear of] the prophet, "Shall the priest [=Aaron] and the prophet [=Hur] be slain in the Sanctuary of God?" (Lamentations 2: 20). If that happens, they will never be forgiven. Better let them worship the golden calf, for which they may yet find forgiveness through repentance. (Sanhedrin 7a)

The third, argued by Ibn Ezra, is that the calf was not an idol at all, and what the Israelites did was, in Aaron's view, permissible. After all, their initial com-

plaint was, "We have no idea what happened to Moses." They did not want a god-substitute but a Moses-substitute, an oracle, something through which they could discern God's instructions – not unlike the function of the Urim and Tummim that were later given to the High Priest. Those who saw the calf as an idol, saying, "This is your god who brought you out of Egypt," were only a small minority – three thousand out of six hundred thousand – and for them Aaron could not be blamed.

So there is a systematic attempt in the history of interpretation to mitigate or minimise Aaron's culpability – inevitably so, since we do not find explicitly that Aaron was punished for the golden calf (though Abrabanel holds that he was punished later). Yet, with all the generosity we can muster, it is hard to see Aaron as anything but weak, especially in the reply he gives to Moses when his brother finally appears and demands an explanation:

"Do not be angry, my lord," Aaron answered. "You know how prone these people are to evil. They said to me, 'Make us a god who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we

don't know what has happened to him.' So I told them, 'Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off.' Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!" (32: 22-24)

There is more than a hint here of the answer Saul gave Samuel, explaining why he did not carry out the prophet's instructions. He blames the people. He suggests he had no choice. He was passive. Things happened. He minimizes the significance of what has transpired. This is weakness, not leadership.

What is really extraordinary, therefore, is the way later tradition made Aaron a hero, most famously in the words of Hillel: *Be like the disciples of Aaron, loving peace, pursuing peace, loving people and drawing them close to the Torah. (Avot 1: 12)*

There are famous aggadic traditions about Aaron and how he was able to turn enemies into friends and sinners into observers of the law. The Sifra says that Aaron never said to anyone, "You have sinned" – all the more remarkable since one of the tasks of the High Priest was, once a year on Yom Kippur, to atone for the sins of the nation. Yet there is none of this explicitly in the Torah itself.

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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 / 15 Adar I

Nuriel ben Yochanan
Meir ben Yaacov

Hanna bat Avraham Hayyim
Vera bat Hannah Hatoun

Monday / 17 Adar I

Ester bat Amnah*

Tuesday / 18 Adar I

Naim ben Yehoshua Moshi

Thursday / 20 Adar I

Itzhak ben Simha

Friday / 21 Adar I

Gershon Doustar*
Itzhak Rahmin Pinhas*

To update, please call the office
at 310.474.0559.

Refuah Shlemah

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
Judith bat Malka • Ofek ben Yochai
• Efrayim Zev ben Fayga • Sulha
Matana bat Mozelle • Gershon ben
David • Farangis Miriam bat
Touran • David ben Leah •
Avraham Haim ben Miryam •
Yaakov ben Freda

Learn to Chant The Haftarah

Wouldn't you like to chant the final portion from the Torah on Shabbat—the portion known as the Haftarah? Reserve a Haftarah reading by calling Sarah in our office at 310.474. 0559. The Haftarah portion can be dedicated in honor of a family event such as a memorial, a bar/bat mitzvah, or a baby-naming. Then, schedule time with Hazan Saeed Jalali & learn the authentic Baghdadi ta'amim, Iraqi melodies for singing from the Torah & Tanakh.

Community News

WELCOME

The community of
Kahal Joseph Congregation
warmly welcomes

Rabbi Simcha Ashlag
and students
who have come from Israel

Thank you for
sharing a Shulchan Shabbat
Dvar Torah, and more.

Women's Tehillim Reading on Mondays

Join Rabbanit Orly Batzri on Monday mornings at 11:30 to read Tehillim, pray and hear a Dvar Torah. A number of individuals in our community are combating illness and need our immediate prayers to support them in their recovery. If you are able to participate contact Orly at orlybatzri@gmail.com. Bring a friend and do a big mitzvah. Ten women minimum are needed.

SEPHARDIC JEWS LIVING THE SARAJEVO HAGGADAH

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 22ND
7:00 PM

Noted journalist and filmmaker Ed Serrotta presents a film and discussion about the history of the Sephardic Jews of Sarajevo and the Balkans followed by a conversation with Rabbi Daniel Bouskila. Pre-registration is required 323-761-8600

Sephardic Educational Center
at the Jewish Federation Bldg.
6505 Wilshire Blvd., L.A. 90048

MEMOIRS: WRITING DOWN YOUR LIFE

A CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOP
FOR ALL LEVELS

8 Tuesday Afternoons
February 15 to April 5, 2011

KJ Library, 12 to 2 pm
\$60 members / \$160 non-members
For information contact Dafna at
dafna@kahaljoseph.org or
Joe Samuels at sabajo@aol.com

SAVE THE DATE! PURIM BAKING FOR KJ GIFT BASKETS

SUNDAY, MARCH 13TH

Join our most talented bakers one Sunday morning to create delicious treats that will be included in Kahal's gift baskets so that all members of our community may enjoy Purim equally well. For information contact Yvette at ydabby@sbcglobal.net

SHABBAT MITZVOT

We offer for donation the following Mitzvot.
1. *Petichat Hechal* opening of the ark;
2. *Carrying of the Sefer Torah & Sefer Haftara*; 3. *Hakamat Sefer* lifting 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 Haftara (read by the clergy unless member reading is preapproved). We suggest a minimum donation of \$126 or multiples of \$18 or \$26. You will receive confirmation before Shabbat to confirm if you will receive the aliya. Members may reserve in advance by calling the office. Non-members reserving aliyot should contact the office for availability at 310.474.0559. We appreciate your support.

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The only proof-text cited by the sages is the passage in Malachi, the last of the prophets, who says about the Cohen in general: *My covenant was with him of life and peace . . . He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and turned many from sin.* (Malachi 2: 5-6)

But Malachi is talking about priesthood in general rather than the historical figure of Aaron. Perhaps the most instructive passage is the Talmudic discussion (Sanhedrin 6b) as to whether arbitration, as opposed to litigation, is a good thing or a bad thing. The Talmud presents this as a conflict between two role models, Moses and Aaron: *Moses's motto was: Let the law pierce the mountain. Aaron, however, loved peace and pursued peace and made peace between man and man.* Moses was a man of law, Aaron of mediation (not the same thing as arbitration but considered similar). Moses was a man of

truth, Aaron of peace. Moses sought justice, Aaron sought conflict resolution. There is a real difference between these two approaches. Truth, justice, law: these are zero-sum equations. If X is true, Y is false. If X is in the right, Y is in the wrong. Mediation, conflict resolution, compromise, the Aaron-type virtues, are all attempts at a non-zero outcome in which both sides feel that they have been heard and their claim has, at least in part, been honored. The Talmud puts it brilliantly by way of a comment on the phrase: *Judge truth and the justice of peace in your gates* (Zechariah 8: 16)

On this the Talmud asks what the phrase "the justice of peace" can possibly mean. "If there is justice, there is no peace. If there is peace, there is no justice. What is the 'justice of peace'? This means arbitration." Now let's go back to Moses, Aaron and the golden calf. Although it is clear that God and Moses regarded the calf as a major sin, Aaron's willingness to pacify the people – trying to delay them, sensing that if he simply said No they would kill him and make it anyway – was not wholly wrong. To be sure, at that moment the people needed a Moses, not an Aaron. But under other circumstances and in the long run they needed both: Moses as the voice of truth and justice, Aaron

with the people-skills to conciliate and make peace.

That is how Aaron eventually emerged in the long hindsight of tradition, as the peace-maker. Peace is not the only virtue, and peacemaking not the only task of leadership. We must never forget that when Aaron was left to lead, the people made a golden calf. But never think, either, that a passion for truth and justice is sufficient. Moses needed an Aaron to hold the people together. In short, leadership is the capacity to hold together different temperaments, conflicting voices and clashing values.

Every leadership team needs both a Moses and an Aaron, a voice of truth and a force for peace.

Shabbat Shalom

Ki Tissa Parsha Summary

General Overview: The portion discusses the census of the Israelites, the washbasin of the Tabernacle, the anointing oils for the priests and kings, the incense offering, and the Sabbath. The Torah then relates the story of the Golden Calf, G-d's anger at the Jewish nation, Moses successfully arguing for Divine forgiveness for the sin, the subsequent breaking of the tablets, and the giving of the second tablets.



First Aliyah: G-d commands Moses to take a census of the Jewish adult male population by collecting an atonement offering of half a silver shekel from each individual. The collected silver was melted down, and was made into sockets for the beams of the Tabernacle. G-d instructs Moses to make a copper washstand for the Tabernacle. The priests would use this laver to wash their hands and feet before their service. G-d tells Moses the recipe for making holy "anointing oil." This oil, which was prepared with various aromatic herbs and fine spices, was used to anoint and sanctify the Tabernacle, its vessels, and Aaron and his sons. The remainder of the oil was put aside, and was used to anoint kings and high priests of future generations. G-d also gives Moses the formula for the incense which was offered twice-daily in the

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Tabernacle. The duplication of the anointing oil or incense for personal use is prohibited. G-d imbues Bezalel with wisdom, and appoints him to be the chief craftsman of the Tabernacle and its contents. G-d appoints Oholiab as his assistant. This lengthy aliyah concludes with G-d telling the Jewish people to observe the Shabbat, the eternal sign between Him and the Children of Israel.

Second Aliyah: After G-d revealed Himself to the entire nation at Mount Sinai and told them the Ten Commandments, Moses ascended the mountain where he remained for forty days. There he was to study the Torah and receive the Tablets. The Jews miscalculate when Moses is supposed to return, and when he doesn't appear on the day when they anticipate him, they grow impatient and demand of Aaron to make for them a new god. Aaron cooperates, all along intending to postpone and buy time until Moses' return, but despite his efforts, a Golden Calf emerges from the flames. The festivities and sacrifices start early next morning. Moses pleads with an incensed G-d to forgive the Jews' sin. G-d acquiesces and relents from His plan to annihilate the Jews. Moses comes down with the Tablets, sees the idolatrous revelry, and breaks the Tab-

lets. Moses enlists the Tribe of Levi to punish the primary offenders. Three thousand idol worshippers are executed on that day. Moses ascends Mount Sinai again, in an attempt to gain complete atonement for the sin. G-d tells Moses to lead the Jews towards the Promised Land, but insists that He won't be leading them personally; instead an angel will be dispatched to lead them. Seeing G-d's displeasure with the Jews, Moses takes his own tent and pitches it outside the Israelite encampment. This tent becomes the center of study and spirituality until the Tabernacle is inaugurated.

Third Aliyah: Moses asks G-d to reconsider the matter of the angel leading them. G-d reconsiders, and agrees to lead them Himself again. Moses then requests that G-d's presence never manifest itself on any other nation other than the Jews.

Fourth Aliyah: G-d's agrees to Moses' request that His presence only dwell amongst the Jews. Moses requests to be shown G-d's glory. G-d agrees, but informs Moses that he will only be shown G-d's "back," not G-d's "face."

Fifth Aliyah: G-d tells Moses to carve new tablets upon which G-d will engrave the Ten Commandments. Moses takes

the new tablets up to Mt. Sinai, where G-d reveals His glory to Moses while proclaiming His Thirteen Attributes of Mercy.

Sixth Aliyah: G-d seals a covenant with Moses, assuring him again that His presence will only dwell with the Jews. G-d informs the Jewish people that He will drive the Canaanites from before them. He instructs them to destroy all vestiges of idolatry from the land, and to refrain from making any covenants with its current inhabitants. The Jews are then commanded not to make molten gods, to observe the three festivals, not to eat chametz on Passover, to sanctify male firstborn humans and cattle, and not to cook meat together with milk.

Seventh Aliyah: Moses descends Mount Sinai with the second tablets, and unbeknownst to him beams of light were projecting off his face. Aaron and the people are originally afraid of him. Moses teaches the people the Torah he studied on the mountain. Moses wears a veil on his face from that time on, but removes it when speaking to G-d and when repeating G-d's words to the people.

*Parasha Summary
courtesy of chabad.org*

KJ Purim Carnival

Our Purim Carnival is coming! We can't wait to see you all there. We want this year's carnival to be even greater than last years. Here is how you can help make it possible.

We need volunteers to join the following committees:

- Sponsor Donations
- Volunteer Organizing
- Food & Carts
- Game/Prize Booth
- Set Up & Decorating
- Sign Printing
- Advertising/Marketing

This event will be successful only if we get the support of the community. As in years past we have asked for booth sponsors.

\$500 Sponsor
receives 4 wristbands

\$250 Sponsor
receives 2 wristbands

\$100 Sponsor
receives 5 tickets

Even if you think you don't have a lot of time to volunteer there are small jobs you can do to make this Purim event successful. For information contact Molly Jalali at molly@kahaljoseph.org

Parashat Ki Tissa
Torah pp. 352 to 368
Haftara pp. 369 to 372

VISITING SCHOLAR SERIES

KAHAL JOSEPH CONGREGATION



Rabbi Moshe Tessone

KJ Scholar-in-Residence

Shabbat, February 25 & 26, 2011

We invite you to join us for an intellectually stimulating, musically inspiring Shabbat as Kahal Joseph hosts Rabbi Moshe Tessone as part of our Scholar-in-Residence program.

Rabbi Moshe Tessone is Director of The Sephardic Community Program at Yeshiva University and is a distinguished faculty member at Yeshiva University's Isaac Breuer College (IBC) where he teaches Jewish Studies. He is also a faculty member at the Belz School of Jewish Music.

Rabbi Tessone has toured extensively throughout North America, South America, Europe and Israel as a rabbinic speaker on Torah, Sephardic history, and Jewish education. He has also featured as a cantorial concert soloist performing Judeo Arabic and Judeo Spanish religious music and liturgy.

Rabbi Tessone released his debut Sephardic Album/CD, entitled *Odeh La' El* in January 2005. His newer album of original Jewish Sephardic music entitled *Hakshiva* was released in March of 2006.

Rabbi Tessone received rabbinic ordination from Yeshiva University's Rabbi Isaac Elchannan Theological Seminary and is a graduate of New York University's Stern School of Business. In addition, he holds a Masters Degree in Jewish Education and Administration.

Saturday
Feb, 25, 2011

Shabbat Day
Sermon during
Morning Services
(about 11:00 am)



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