

KOL MEVASSER

We are pleased to welcome
Rabbi Raif Melhado
 KJ Rabbinical Candidate
 to pray with us and deliver his sermon

Rabbi Raif Melhado studies at Yeshivat Chovevai Torah and previously studied at Yeshivat Hakkibutz Hadati at Ein Tzurim and the Pardes Institute in Jerusalem. He holds a BA in history from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he served as the executive director of the Cohen Hillel Center. Rabbi Melhado is currently earning his Master's Degree in Modern Jewish History at Yeshiva University, and serves as assistant director for the university network at the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals. In his spare time, he operates Ketershemtov.com, a website devoted to the works of Rabbi Shemtob Gaguine in documenting and explaining Sephardi customs & traditions.



When Rabbis Engage in Fraud and Bribery...

Rabbi Daniel Bouskila
 Parashat Mishpatim (Exodus 21:1 – 24:18)

On November 26, 1936, Rav Ben Zion Meir Hai Uziel delivered a lecture to a large gathering of rabbis in Jerusalem. Titled *The Seat of the Rabbinate*, Rav Uziel's words were delivered as an introduction to that day's elections for the Council of the Chief Rabbinate of the Land of Israel. Speaking to rabbis who would potentially join him as part of the Land of Israel's national rabbinic leadership, Rav Uziel articulated what he felt were the priorities of the rabbinate in the *Yishuv* that

would eventually lead way to the modern-day State of Israel: *When it comes to public and national matters, the issue of Mishpat (The Torah's Civil Laws) is a weighty and burdensome responsibility (on the rabbi), for it is these matters that establish the path of life towards success or disaster, peace or dispute. God thus commanded us: "Execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates" (Zecharia 8:16).*

When Rav Uziel used the term "*mishpat*" to describe the Torah's Civil Laws, what was he referring to?

"And these are the rules (*Mishpatim*) that you shall set before them." With this verse, immediately following the giving of the Ten Commandments at

(Continued on page 3)

KJ Schedule Shabbat Shekalim Parashat Mishpatim

Erev Shabbat Shekalim
 Friday, February 13th

Shaharit / Morning Prayer ...6:30 am
Shabbat Candle Lighting . 5:16 pm
 Minha / Arbith5:16 pm

Shabbat Shekalim
Parashat Mishpatim

Saturday, February 14th

Shaharit/Morning Prayer8:30 am
 Birkat Hachodesh for Adar
 Rabbi Raif Melhado, Guest Speaker
 Minha, Seudah, Arvit4:45 pm
 Motzei Shabbat / Havdala....6:21 pm

Weekdays

Sunday, February 15th

Shaharit7:30 am

President's Day

Monday, February 16th

Shaharit / Morning PrayerTBA

Tuesday & Wednesday, Feb 16 to 20

Shaharit / Morning Prayer ...6:30 am

Rosh Hodesh Adar / New Month

Thursday, February 19th

Shaharit / Morning Prayer ...6:15 am

Erev Shabbat &

Rosh Hodesh Adar

Friday, February 20th

Shaharit / Morning Prayer ...6:15 am
Shabbat Candle Lighting . 5:23 pm
 Minha / Arbith5:23 pm

Happy Rosh Hodesh Adar

In the Community . . .

Sephardic Mini Course with Rabbi Bouskila

Tuesday, February 17th at 7:00 pm

“Arabic Music in the Synagogue?”

Exploring the Judeo-Arabic Maqam & Piyyut Cantorial Tradition through a lecture and audio excerpts
At the Jewish Federation Bldg, No charge. RSVP required to 323-272-4574 or info@secjerusalem.org.

“Escape from Iraq” with Joe Samuels

**Adult Education Series at Mishkon Tephilo
Sunday, February 22nd at 10:30 am**

Fearing for his life after Iraq lost its war against Israel in 1948, Joe Samuels was smuggled out of Iraq to Iran. He arrived in Israel as a refugee. He has published a number of articles on his experience. Breakfast served, \$10. For more information, please contact Carol V. Davis, at cvdavis@ix.netcom.com

JVS Scholarship Available

The Jewish Vocational Service Scholarship is a need-based program for college and graduate school for Jewish students who are permanent residents of Los Angeles County. The online application period for the 2015-2016 academic year closes March 15, 2015. More information at www.jvsla.org.

Shabbat Kiddush

is sponsored in memory of

Norma Dabby, z”l

by

Karen & Frank Dabby

Condolences

to the family and friends of

Saul Sasson, z”l

longtime member of the Kahal Joseph community. We especially send our thoughts and prayers to his surviving siblings Aaron, Tabby, and Rachel and to his son, Glen, and the entire family.

May Hashem comfort them together with all the mourners of Tzion

Shabbat Sheqalim: Torah & Haftara Readings

Torah from the Book of Exodus/Shemot; Parashat Mishpatim 306 to 322

Parashat Sheqalim 352 to 353 • Haftara from Kings II / Melachim Bet 992 to 995

Shabbat Sheqalim is one of four special Shabbat days leading up to Pesah (Passover). On each of these four, special Torah readings are chanted after the regular weekly Torah portion. Shabbat Sheqalim recalls the census taken in the Sinai desert wilderness wherein Bne Yisrael each donated a half-shekel as a tax to maintain the Mishkan (Holy Tabernacle). The coins were counted instead of the people themselves as a way of taking the census.

There are many lessons to be learned from this brief passage. The fact that both rich and poor contribute the same amount reminds us that rich and poor are equally valued in the eyes of the Divine. The fact that we count coins instead of people reminds us that people are not to be thought of as mere numbers on a ledger. The fact that the census contributions are used to maintain the Tent of Meeting reminds us of the importance of contributing to the upkeep of the synagogue.

Refuah Shlemah

Moselle Amron • Maurice Ovadia
Abe Abraham • Sassoon Ezra • Tilda Levy

In Memoriam

We remember these yearzeit anniversaries for February 14 to 21, 2015. It is customary to light a memorial candle, donate tzedaka, & attend services the preceding Shabbat.

25 Shvat / Shabbat, February 14th

Norma Dabby *Naima bat Farha*
Morton Raymond Einy *Mordecai ben Rahamim*
Abraham Sales *Avraham ben Sassoon*

26 Shvat / Sunday, February 15th

Mozelle bat Simha
Moshe Solomon *Moshe Hai ben David*
Abraham Haim Yaacov *Avraham ben Haim*

27 Shvat / Monday, February 16th

Ezra Avrahamy *Ezra ben Yosef*
Nathan Bass *Nathan ben Yisrael*
Moshe Dallal

28 Shvat / Tuesday, February 17th

Hilda Jacob *Haviva bat Masooda*
Nassim Shamash *Nassim ben Sarah Khatoun*
29 Shvat / Wednesday, February 18th
Ramah Duke *Ramah bat Salha Khatoun*
Georgia Jiji

30 Shvat / Thursday, February 19th

Nagi Avraham *Nagi ben Murad*
Shaul Cohen *Shaul ben David*
Haim Elazar *Haim ben Yisrael*
Catherine Moses *Khatoun Matana bat Masooda*

1 Adar / Friday, February 20th

Yosef Soffer *Yosef ben Eliyahu*

2 Adar / Shabbat, February 21st

Abraham Aslan *Avraham ben Menashe*
Aaron J. Moses *Aharon ben Yosef*
Joseph Faraj Moses *Yoseph Faraj ben Yoseph Haim*

(Continued from page 1)

Mount Sinai, God begins to legislate the detailed version of the Torah's system of civil legislation. The word *Mishpatim* refers to civil laws and ordinances, and by making these laws the first "post-Ten Commandments" legislation of mitzvot, God sends a very powerful message about what it means to be a truly "religious community." Most people looking to create a "religious community" would begin by building a house of worship. In the Torah, God sees things differently. As the Jewish people are in the initial stages of building their own "religious community," civil laws governing relationships between people are legislated *before* the laws on building a house of worship. Courts and judges come before tabernacles and High Priests. *Parashat Mishpatim* deals in matters that don't seem "religious or spiritual" to most people -- personal injury, damages due to negligence, paying employees on time, borrowing items or lending money, to name just a few -- but these actually form the core of how the Torah envisions a religious Jewish society to behave everyday. The message is that the first definition of being "religious" is how one behaves at work or in business, and how one treats his/her fellow human being. God knows that it's much easier to behave "religiously" inside a tabernacle, Temple or synagogue. The true challenge is maintaining that religiosity in the workplace and at home.

Well aware of all of this, when he stood up to deliver an inspirational address to rabbis who would be tasked with helping to shape a society that reflected the core values of Judaism within the emerging State of Israel, Rav Uziel chose not speak about ritual laws governing synagogues. Instead, he laid out a set of priorities for the rabbis to deal with:

Our wide ranging Jewish legal literature enlightens our path to help us solve all of the new and

contemporary legal problems that living in our new Yishuv places before us. Having this Jewish legal literature in our hands requires us to address and solve these various problems in the most desirable manner.

Rav Uziel then offers a strong word of caution: *To not deal with these issues, or even to put them on the back burner, will cause for our society to move in a different and virtually irreversible direction.*

Indeed, Rav Uziel's words of caution were unfortunately well grounded in Jewish history. Both Temples in Jerusalem were destroyed because the Jewish people in the Land of Israel failed to create or uphold societies based on *Mishpatim*. As the Jewish people now returned to their land for a third try at Jewish statehood, he did not want to see them make the same tragic mistakes.

This vision of a *Mishpatim*-centered Jewish society was not Rav Uziel's original idea.

The Book of Psalms teaches: *"Righteousness (Tzedek) and justice (Mishpat) are the base of God's throne"* (Psalms 89:15). On this verse, the 13th century Sephardic Talmudist *Rabbeinu Yonah* comments: *"Whoever upholds justice (Mishpat) upholds God's throne, and whoever perverts justice defiles God's throne."*

The largest and most complex section of the Mishna & Talmud is *Seder Nezikin* (The Order of Damages), which contains the expanded halakhic/legal details of the civil laws/mitzvot found in *Parashat Mishpatim*. In one of the most popularly studied tractates in *Seder Nezikin* -- Tractate *Baba Kamma* -- we are taught: *"Rav Yehudah says: He who wishes to be a pious person (hasid) should seek to fulfill the halakhot in Seder Nezikin"* (Baba Kamma, 30:a).

Rav Uziel's innovation was less in the concept of articulating the centrality of *Mishpatim*, and more in elevating this to the highest priority for rabbis in the Land of Israel:

As you approach the seat of the rabbinate that you will sit upon after your election, take to heart that the full domain of mishpat -- including all of its problems & issues -- has been placed in your hands, and it will be upon you -- through trustworthiness, love honor and admiration -- to bring the entire nation closer (to the values) of Jewish Civil Law. Mishpat, Tzedek and Din Emet L'Amito-- judgement, righteousness and the truthful execution of the law to its fullest extent of truth -- serve as the foundations for the unity of our nation.

79 years after Rav Uziel delivered these powerful words, we are the unfortunate witnesses to continued immoral behavior and corruption by Israeli elected officials, and even by some in the highest echelons of the Israeli Chief Rabbinate. As he delivered these words to a gathering of rabbis, Rav Uziel never envisioned, in his worst nightmares, that he would wake up to read an Israeli newspaper article (as we did a few days ago) whose story line reads *Former Israeli Chief Rabbi Arrested for Bribery and Fraud of Millions of Shekels*.

In the prayer for the State of Israel that we recite in synagogue every Shabbat we say *"Send your light and your truth to its leaders, officers and counselors."* It's not by chance that this prayer was authored by two of the 20th century's greatest rabbinic leaders ever to hold the title of Chief Rabbi: Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Isaac Halevi Herzog, and his colleague, Sephardi Chief Rabbi Ben Zion Meir Hai Uziel.

In the spirit of Rav Uziel's inspirational address to the rabbis in 1936, may God indeed send His light and His truth to Israel's "leaders, officers and counselors", and...to its rabbis.

RIDES & GAMES

BEST Prizes, Prizes, PRIZES!

Hot Dogs! **FALAFEL!** Hamburgers!
Snowcones, Candy & **MORE!**

Kahal Joseph Congregation



Purim Carnival

Sunday, March 8th
11 am to 4 pm



Game & Ride Wristbands—\$20/person ♦ Tickets—\$1

Wristbands are good for games and rides only.

Tickets for food and special services purchased separately.

For more information call 310.474.0559

Purim

Baking for Community Gift Baskets



Sunday, March 1st
10:00 am to ?

Do a Mitzvah! Help others!
Give on Purim!

Have fun & bake treats for KJ's Purim gift baskets!

Baskets are delivered to many appreciative members!

Donations in support of KJ Purim Baskets are greatly appreciated. Please send to:

Kahal Joseph Congregation—Purim Baskets
10505 Santa Monica Blvd., L.A. CA 90025.

For more information
call the office at
310.474.0559 or e-mail
yvettedabby@gmail.com



We want you to be a member!

Did you join us for services, guest speakers or special events this year? Consider annual membership in Kahal Joseph. Join our community!

Call Sarah at 310.474.0559

Errol Levi Social Hall & Ballroom

Kahal Joseph has one of the most beautiful ballrooms on the Westside for events up to 200 guests. *Contact Sarah 310.474.0559*