

Human Dignity, not Bureaucratic Indignity

Rabbi Marc D. Angel

In his essay "The Community" (Tradition, 17:2), Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik underscored the dignity of each individual: "To recognize a person is not just to identify him physically. It is more than that: it is an act of identifying him existentially, as a person who has a job to do, that only he can do properly. To recognize a person means to affirm that he is irreplaceable. To hurt a person means to tell him that he is expendable, that there is no need for him. The halakha equated the act of publicly embarrassing a person with murder."

In our technological and bureaucratic world, it is easy to lose sight of the dignity of the individual. We are often reduced to i.d. numbers, or to long lists of clients/patients/customers where our particular personalities are of little account. We are shuffled through the system along with thousands of other faceless people.

Rabbi Soloveitchik pointed out that we need to be careful to stay alert

to the humanity of those with whom we deal. This is true not only in general interpersonal relationships, but also in matters of halakha.

Historically, when people had halakhic questions or issues, they brought them to their local synagogue rabbi. The rabbi knew them, knew their families, knew the context of their lives. Since there was a personal bond between the individual and the rabbi, there was also honest communication.

In recent years, the halakhic world has undergone increasing bureaucratization. An Israeli rabbi recently lectured a group of American rabbis, telling us that Jews in Israel often lack a strong personal tie to their rabbi. The rabbi is appointed by the Rabbanut, and the rabbi frequently doesn't even live in the community he is supposed to serve. He is a religious functionary paid by the government. He gets paid whether or not he develops close relationships with members of the community.

When the rabbinate becomes a bureaucratic system, it invariably becomes like other bureaucracies. It becomes more distant from the public; it sees people as case numbers; it needs

to "process" cases, rather than spend the time and effort to really understand the people who come before them.

The centralization of the rabbinate--whether in Israel or the diaspora--ultimately depersonalizes the halakhic system. We have dayanim passing judgment in cases of conversion, Jewish status, agunah etc., who have no personal connection with the people whose lives are radically affected by their decisions. We have posekim who argue the fine points of halakha based on their halakhic tomes--but who don't look into the eyes and don't hear the voices of the very people they are supposed to serve. Rabbis issue rulings on conversions--even if they have seldom or never actually worked with a convert, or experienced the spiritual or personal struggles of the convert. Rabbinic courts "process cases" of marriage and divorce, without knowing much about the inner lives of those whose lives are being powerfully transformed.

Halakha works best when it is most human and humane. It is most meaningful when the rabbis and the laymen know each other and understand each other. When local rabbis feel unable to solve the issues that are brought to them, they

Prayer Schedule

SHABBAT

PARASHAT BAMIDBAR

Friday, May 27th, 2011

Shaharit 6:30 am

Minhah & Arbit 6:30 pm

Candle Lighting 7:37 pm

Saturday, May 28th, 2011

Shaharit 8:30 am

Tehillim 6:00 pm

Class w/R. Batzri 6:15 pm

Minhah & Arbit 6:45 pm

Motzei Shabbat 8:42 pm

WEEKDAYS

Sunday, May 29th

Shaharit 7:30 am

Monday-Friday

ROSH HODESH SIVAN

Thursday, June 2nd

Women's Tehillim 6:00 pm

at a private home. RSVP to

OrlySBatzri@gmail.com

EREV SHABBAT

PARASHAT NASO

Friday, June 3rd, 2011

Shaharit 6:30 am

Minhah & Arbit 6:30 pm

Candle Lighting 7:42 pm

Submissions Deadline
Kol Mevasser Newsletter
Tuesdays at 6 pm
Thank You!

Torah Readings

Parasha 568-580

Haftara 582-585

can turn to other rabbis for guidance. When technical matters such as gittin are required, the local rabbi should be there to help his congregants through the process.

(Continued on page 4)

CONGRATULATIONS

Rita Zakoo
and Baruch Isaac
on your marriage

Mazal Tov
Helen Zakoo and Family
Raymond Isaac and Family

CONDOLENCES

to the family and friends of
Maisie Solomon, z"l

Our deepest sympathy goes out to
her sister, Sophie Elias, and her
brother, Elias Delomey.

May Hashem comfort them together
with all the mourners of Tzion.

RABBI ASHLAG

will be the guest of
Rabbi Hagay Batzri from
May 26th through 31st, 2011

We welcome him
as our guest speaker
for Shabbat Bamidbar
at Kahal Joseph Congregation

NOTICE TO PARENTS

1. Children under 5 years old must be supervised by a parent when using our KIDS ZONE upstairs.
2. No child is allowed to remain in the synagogue lobby without the constant supervision of a parent or guardian.
3. We are not responsible for unsupervised children walking out the front door.

In Memoriam

It is customary to light a memorial candle 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
Simjkha bat Michael

Monday / 26 Iyar
Sarah bat Ester

Tuesday / 27 Iyar
Sassoon Yoseph Elisha

Wednesday / 28 Iyar
Hannah Khaton bat Mozelle
Tov

Joseph Hai Ezra Shimon

Friday / 1 Sivan
Ezra Shalom Avraham

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 •
Prina 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 • Rachel bat
Mazal Tov • Avraham ben Rab-
bie • Mazal Sigalit bat Rivkah •
Orit bat Tikvah • Yaakov ben
Aliyah • Chana Leah bat Reiza •
Victoria Cohen • Avraham
Moshe ben Miriam • Mordecai
Haim ben Hanna



Early Bird Discount

\$50 off Registration
if your child enrolls
before June 16, 2011

2011-12 Tuition & Fees
Registration \$150
Tuition \$1,500 First Child
\$1,000 Additional Child
plus KJ Membership
*Associate Membership &
Scholarship Application available*

Norma & Sam Dabby Jewish Education Center

Kahal Joseph Hebrew School

Torah Studies! Hebrew Language! Jewish History! Holiday Celebrations! Prayer!

Tuesdays & Thursdays 4:30 to 6:30 pm • Ages 5 to 13, K to 8th Grade

Near Westwood & Century City, 10505 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles 90025

Molly Jalali, Director 310.474.0559, molly@kahaljoseph.org

Read the Haftarah

Wouldn't you like to chant the concluding section of the Torah read on Shabbat—the Haftarah? Reserve a haftarah portion at 310.474. 0559. Then, schedule time with Saeed & learn your haftarah with authentic Iraqi melodies.

There will be
No Monday Tehillim
reading this week
Come to the Rosh Hodesh
Sivan Celebration!



You're
invited!

Rosh Hodesh Sivan

Sivan is the third month of the Jewish calendar.
Traditionally it marks the time that the Jewish people became
a nation by receiving the Torah at Sinai.
According to tradition, the people arrived at Mt. Sinai
on Rosh Chodesh Sivan.

Dear Ladies,

Rosh Hodesh Sivan celebration will held in a private home

Date: June 2, 2011

5:30 pm

We will start reading Tehillim at 6:00 pm- exactly.
Please don't be late, since we don't read Tehillim at night time.

Looking forward to see you,
Orly Batzri

Please confirm your Arrival

Orlyshatzri@gmail.com

310-918-5101

(Continued from page 1)

In an increasingly depersonalized world, the religious community needs to keep focused on the dignity of the individual.

This week's Torah portion describes a census that took place among the Israelites in the wilderness. A census can be the ultimate depersonalization process: it is interested in a head count, not on the nature of the people whose heads are being counted.

Yet, the Torah goes out of its way to insist that those being counted should not be treated as numbers. They were to be counted "by their families, by their fathers' houses, according to the number of names." Even in this bureaucratic procedure, each individual was to be seen as part of a family and counted by name. Each was a real human being, and the Torah did not want the census takers to forget this essential fact.

Religious life demands keen sensitivity to the uniqueness of each person. Halakha functions best when our full humanity is recognized and respected. The halakhic system must foster human dignity, not bureaucratic indignity.

Shabbat Shalom



**SPONSOR
KIDDUSH or
SEUDAH SHLISHEET**

To sponsor a Shabbat Kiddush or a Seudah Shlisheet, an afternoon meal, in honor of a special occasion for a family member or friend, please contact Sarah in our office at 310.474.0559. We ask that you notify us 1-2 weeks in advance of the date so that we may honor your generous tribute. Thank you!

ADVERTISEMENTS

in the Kol Mevasser
now available

Let the community know
about your business
or simcha through us!

Ad Donation Rates

Members

\$200 for 4 issues

Non-members

\$300 for 4 issues

Advertising Deadline is 6 pm on Tuesdays.

Size of advertisement is 3 1/2" x 4"; Ad design and layout available at \$50/hour.

Or, send ready-to-use copy in *pdf* or *jpeg* format to dafna@kahaljoseph.org.