

# KOL MEVASSER

## Light the Menorah: Illuminating Our Spirit

Written by Rabbi Hagay Batzri  
Edited by Dafna Ezran-Young

When we think of Jewish art we recognize that we do not have a lot of art compared to other religions. But when we do create art, the menorah is often used as a symbol. Why is the menorah so important to us?

For example, we see one of the Psalms rendered as a menorah above the stage in Kahal's sanctuary, over the ark where the Torah scrolls are kept. This psalm, "Lamnatze-akh b'mginot," provides a poetic counterpart to the menorah. Each verse is designed precisely, and there are seven sentences paralleling the seven branches of the menorah. The detailed structure of the psalm also correlates with details in the menorah: each word, each letter corresponds with one of the cups, flowers and knobs of the menorah.

Our Torah portion of the week, "Behaalotkha," refers to the lighting of the menorah first in the Mishkan, the desert sanctuary, and later in the Bet HaMikdash, the Temple in Jerusalem. The menorah is

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## Congratulate Your Graduate!

Summer is just around the corner, and the end of the school year is almost here. We are preparing our graduation issue of the newsletter. Send the name of your graduate, photo, school, and degree by Sunday, June 2nd for our special issue! Email information & jpegs (750kb max) to [dafna@kahaljoseph.org](mailto:dafna@kahaljoseph.org)

## KJ Schedule

Parashat Behaalotkha

### Erev Shabbat / Eve of Shabbat Friday, May 24th

Shaharit .....	6:30 am
Shir Hashirim .....	6:45 pm
Minha & Arbit .....	7:00 pm
Candle Lighting.....	7:36 pm

### Yom Shabbat / Shabbat Day Saturday, May 25th

Shaharit .....	8:30 am
Class with Rabbi Batzri .....	6:05 pm
Ladies Tehillim .....	6:05 pm
Minha/Arbit .....	6:50 pm
Shabbat Havdallah .....	8:22 pm

### Weekdays

#### Sunday-Monday, May 26 & 27

Shaharit .....	7:30 am
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#### Tuesday through Friday, May 28 to 31

Shaharit .....	6:30 am
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### Erev Shabbat

#### Friday, May 31st

Shaharit .....	6:30 am
Shir Hashirim .....	6:45 pm
Minha & Arbit .....	7:00 pm
Candle Lighting.....	7:40 pm

## TORAH READINGS

Parashat Behaalotkha 605 to 619  
Haftara from Zechariah 620 to 622

# Tikkun Lel Shavuot

By Joe Samuels



It is customary to stay up all night studying Torah on Shavuot night, known as Tikkun lel

Shavuot. Shavuot commemorates the divine gift of receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai. It is about the unique essence of Judaism. At Sinai, freedom from slavery was recast into fidelity to law and literacy.

In Jerusalem, one can spend the whole night wandering from one *tikkun* gathering to another *tikkun*, which are held in homes, synagogues, community centers, and educational institutions.

In Baghdad, where I was born and grew up, our family gathered in our house on *tikkun* nights for an all-night prayer. A large table was set up with a variety of dairy foods, since the Torah is compared to milk and honey. Then there was another table for candles. Everyone would light candles to commemorate the spirit of the departed. For us kids, watching the candles melt and collecting the wax was the biggest fun. It may sound silly, but it kept us awake until very late at night.

At Kahal, it has been a tradition to observe Tikkun Lel Shavuot. This year was no exception. At 9.30 in the evening, men and women gathered in the main sanctuary to read and discuss the Torah. Our senior Hazan, Sassoon Ezra began reading the

abbreviated form of the Torah. The theme, of course, concentrated on the Ten Commandments. Many congregants participated in reading different portions.

When the reading was finished, the crowd adjourned to the Errol Levi social hall in order to light candles in memory of our beloved departed. We also enjoyed a variety of dairy dishes including cheesecake, ice cream, fruit and nuts.

This year we had a special treat from Rabbi Hagay Batzri. To make the discussion challenging and stimulating, he divided the crowd into two groups, including both men and women. He would pose a question related to observance, ritual or interpretation of the Torah. Each correct answer would earn the group points. When one group didn't answer correctly, it lost its turn to the other group. The discussion was very enjoyable and enriching, and left each of us with more knowledge, facts, and understanding of the benefits and practices of our sacred Torah.

Our Tikkun was an evening of spiritual uplift and delightful bliss combined with a sense of camaraderie and communal friendship. Before we departed, around midnight, we were given an additional blessing from our beloved Modechai Cohen who also wished all Chag Shavuot Sameach, a Happy Shavuot holiday.

## In Memoriam

We remember these yearzeit anniversaries for May 25th to June 1st, 2013. It is customary to light a memorial candle, donate tzedaka, and attend services the preceding Shabbat.

**22 Sivan / Friday, May 31st**

Rebecca Litvac *Rivka bat Esther*

Lily Judah *Lulu bat Toba*

**23 Sivan / Shabbat, June 1st**

Salim Kamara *Salim ben Ezra*

## Refuah Shlemah

Yocheved bat Rachel, Mazal bat Malka, Dan Herdoon, Mazal Tov bat Salha Matana, Moshe ben Ezra, Sasson ben Rahel/Sassoon Moses, Penina bat Henia, Dov Ber ben Sonia, Maurice Ovadia / Moshe ben Noosha, Pnina bat Esther, Vera Levi Yossef ben Jamila, Ruth bat Aliza

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a primary symbol of the Jewish people. Even though the Magen David, the star from King David's shield, is more popular, the menorah offers a message about our inner lives that touches upon G-d's purpose in creating the universe.

The Temple menorah had seven branches. The number seven has great significance in the Jewish tradition. Some instances of seven include: seven days of the week, seven forefathers of the Jewish people, seven holidays, seven years for the Shmita when the fallow land rests and debts are forgiven, and so on.

The Ben Ish Hai suggests that we also can see the structure of the menorah and its seven branches in the design of our faces. The middle column of the menorah corresponds to our mouth, because there is only one and it is at the center. The other six branches form a symmetrical reflection around this middle branch, just as do our two nostrils, our two eyes, and our two ears on either side of our mouth.

Why is this important, that the menorah can be seen in our faces? A person should always think of himself in terms of the symbolism of the menorah.

One of the laws regarding the menorah is conveyed by G-d to Moses in the following terms, at the beginning of this week's

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Torah portion: "behaalotkha et ha'nerot" or "when you raise up" the lights to kindle the lamps of the menorah. "Nerot" or "lamps" are just a physical thing that we have to take care of on the menorah. But Rashi, the famous Torah commentator, explains that light and the process of lighting the menorah has to do with our souls, our "neshama."

Like the seven lamps of the menorah, the seven components of our faces (mouth, nostrils, eyes, ears) are merely physical parts of our bodies. But, we must use everything in our power, everything we do, to take care of how we use these elements of our faces. We must "raise up" and sanctify our use of these bodily parts.

How do we elevate use of our mouth, for example? When we watch what we say to others, what our facial expressions communicate, what we eat and use to nourish ourselves, then we elevate our use of our mouths. We kindle a light that exists in each of us and that may kindle and positively influence those around us. The same thing happens when we are careful with the faculties of sight, hearing and listening, and so on, each associated with part of our faces.

The message here is that each one of us is, potentially, like a menorah. Just as in a menorah, the most important thing is that our spiritual light remains kindled at all times. In addition, only the purest olive oil

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was acceptable for the menorah's flame. Similarly, our spiritual light must be of good quality and must elevate our spirit in an enduring way.

Especially for us, the Jewish people, this is an important principle. We are tasked with being a "light to the nations." We are told that we have the responsibility of becoming like the head of the body, capable of guiding the world spiritually. How may we create this type of light in our lives?

The Ben Ish Hai, when he compares our faces to the menorah, teaches us what to do. His analogy tells us that we elevate our spirit, we kindle our inner light, by having full control over our senses. When we think about what we take in, what we feed our spirit through our senses, we nurture the flame of our inner light. And, reciprocally, our inner light then illuminates our senses, guiding our perceptions and responses to the world. Then we may approach the world and contribute to it in a positive, constructive manner.

*Shabbat Shalom*

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### **David S. Kelly Youth Choir Summer Break**

Beginning this week our Youth Choir is on vacation. We will resume on August 25th. We thank our kids, parents, devoted volunteers, and Rabbi Batzri who all put so much into this program to make it great. Enjoy your summer!





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