

# KOL MEVASSER

## In the Narrow Places: After Tisha B'Av

By Erica Brown

How do we behave in exile, especially when we do not feel as though we are in exile? We turn to Jeremiah, the prophet who foretold of the first exile to Babylon, for advice. He preempted what the ancient Israelites may have thought was the appropriate religious response by writing a letter to his followers. The gloom and doom that we would naturally expect the prophet to suggest – and that fills page after page of his prophetic testimony – is curiously absent from his letter. Instead, he presents a formula that strikes us with its contemporary resonances.

In chapter 29, we read of the letter that Jeremiah wrote to a group of exiles in Babylon, which he dispatched from the land of Israel with Elasah, the man whom King Zedekiah sent to Babylon to see King Nebuchadnezzar. In addition to Elasah's diplomatic mission, he was also to present this letter as guidance for the small but growing community of exiles.

The chapter begins with the letter's intended audience:

*This is the text of the letter which the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the priests,*

*(Continued on page 3)*

## President's Message

This week we celebrate the 93<sup>rd</sup> birthday of our dear member, Michael Amron.



Michael and his lovely wife Moselle have been loyal and generous members of Kahal Joseph for over 50 years, and this year they will be celebrating their 69th wedding anniversary. They enjoy their children Sally, David and his wife Jessica, and their grandchildren—Ariel, Benjamin and Abigail.

As incredible ballroom dancers, Michael and Moselle danced their way into our hearts. And Michael is always the life of the party, whether dressed as Charlie Chaplin, a cowboy or, best of all, a woman. In 2011, we honored this special couple at our Legacy of Kindness Gala dinner. It was truly an unforgettable night.

I could say so much about Michael—but it would not get printed here! On behalf of Kahal Joseph, we wish you an amazing 93rd Birthday, and many more healthy and happy years of bringing joy to all of us

Ronald Einy

## KJ Schedule

### Parashat Va'etchanan Erev Shabbat Nachamu Friday, July 19th

Shaharit .....	6:30 am
Shir Hashirim .....	6:45 pm
Minha & Arbit .....	7:00 pm
Candle Lighting.....	7:44 pm

### Shabbat Nachamu Saturday, July 20th

Shaharit .....	8:30 am
Class with Rabbi Batzri .....	6:15 pm
Ladies Tehillim .....	6:15 pm
Minha/Arbit .....	7:00 pm
Shabbat Havdallah .....	8:28 pm

### Weekdays Sunday, July 21st

Shaharit .....	7:30 am
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### Monday to Friday, July 22nd to 26th

Shaharit .....	6:30 am
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### Tu B'Av / 15th Day of Av Monday, July 22nd

### Erev Shabbat Friday, July 26th

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

Parashat Va'etchanan  
Torah Portion from  
Book of Deuteronomy / Devarim 755 to 776  
Haftara from Isaiah/Yishayahu 776 to 779

## Shabbat Kiddush

is co-sponsored  
in honor of

the 93rd Birthday of  
Michael Amron

## Shabbat Kiddush

is co-sponsored  
in honor of  
the upcoming marriage of

Navid Zadeh &  
Michelle Reder

by Susan and Bijan Zadeh

## Welcome Rabbi Meir Sultan

Kahal Joseph Guest Speaker  
on Shabbat Nahamu

Rabbi Sultan will present his  
thoughts on the topic of

*"From Your Lips to G-d's Ears"*

## Congratulations

Susan and Bijan Zadeh  
Orly and Glen Reder

on the upcoming marriage of  
Navid and Michelle

Mazal Tov to both families

## In Memoriam

We remember these yearzeit anniversaries for  
July 20th to 27th, 2013. It is customary to light a  
memorial candle, donate tzedaka, and attend  
services the preceding Shabbat.

### 14 Av / Sunday, July 21st

Moshi Hagooli *Moshe ben Yehezkel*  
Eliyahu Mizrahie *Eliyahu ben Mordechai*  
*Pinchas ben Channah*

### 17 Av / Wednesday, July 24th

Jacob Jonah *Yaacov Yonah ben Yonah Yitzhak*  
Sabiha Kattan *Sabiha bat Gurjiya Horesh*  
Matilda Levi *Massoodah bat Tirkie*

### 18 Av / Thursday, July 25th

Khadoori Sasson *Kadoori ben Sasson*

### 19 Av / Friday, July 26th

Esther Shapiro *Ester bat Rivka*

## Refuah Shlemah

Yocheved bat Rachel Mazal bat Malka,  
Dan Herdoon Mazal Tov bat Salha Matana  
Moshe ben Ezra Vera Levi  
Sasson ben Rahel/Sassoon Moses  
Penina bat Henia Dov Ber ben Sonia  
Maurice Ovadia / Moshe ben Noosha,  
Pnina bat Esther Yossef ben Jamila  
Ruth bat Aliza Dina bat Simha  
Shoshana Goury/ Shoshana bat Rahel  
Gerry Meyers / Ezra ben Yosef Aharon  
Yehoshua ben Channah



## Books on Iraqi Jewish Literature Now at KJ

We are pleased to offer a selection of books exploring the history and significance of Iraqi Jewish literature and religious writings. Written by UCLA Professor of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, Lev Hakak., these books offer careful analysis and refreshing insights into our heritage. For more information or to purchase contact Sarah in the office at 310.474.0559.

## Please Return KJ Library Books

Many people enjoy our amazing library. Recently a number of books (cookbooks, Jewish histories, tehillim etc.) have been missing. If you have had a KJ library book for over two weeks, please return it so others may share our collection. With thanks in advance.

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*(Continued from page 1)*

*the prophets, the rest of the elders of the exile community, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar has exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon... (Jeremiah 29:1)*

The condition of exile changes personal and communal identity. You are in one place but your heart and mind are in another. To quote Rabbi Judah HaLevi, “I am in the west, but my heart is in the east.” To be an exile is never to reconcile yourself with where you are, but to live in a persistent hope of where you want to be. In the book of Esther, Mordechai is the only person introduced as an exile, as someone who knows that he is not where he should ultimately be at a time of immense assimilation. Imagine the immigrant who, when asked who he is, always mentions the place he comes from and not the place where he currently resides. He lives in perpetual dislocation.

Jeremiah, perhaps realizing the crippling impact of dislocation on the soul of a people, advised against this kind of thinking:

*This said the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, to the whole community which I exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them, plant gardens and eat their fruit. Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters. Multiply there, do not decrease. And seek the welfare of the city to which I have exiled you and pray to the Lord in its behalf; for in its prosperity you shall prosper. (Ibid. 29:4–7)*

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In line after line, Jeremiah adds to his demands across generations, not only in the immediacy of the day but with the foreknowledge that exile can become more than a momentary condition but a way of life, for decades if not centuries.

Build houses, he tells them. Plant gardens. Seek the welfare of the city. Building a house is a statement of permanence. This is Jeremiah’s starting point. Yet as he moves on, we, the readers, realize that building a house is perhaps the least permanent act on Jeremiah’s list of recommendations for exile. After all, no matter where you are, you need some form of shelter even if, as an exile, you build something temporary in keeping with your desire to leave.

Jeremiah moves from building houses to planting gardens. The Malbim (1809–1879) observes that planting a garden implies a longer stay than building a house since the process of sowing and cultivation requires time. He cites a verse from Isaiah that seems to imply the exact opposite of Jeremiah’s thinking:

*They shall not build for others to dwell in, or plant for others to enjoy. For the days of My people shall be as long as the days of a tree; My chosen ones shall outlive the work of their hands. They shall not toil to no purpose. They shall not bear children for terror. (Isaiah 65:22–23)*

Whereas Isaiah does not want others to benefit from the planting of gardens, Jeremiah wants the gardeners to take advantage of what good can be found while on foreign soil; to invest in their lives.

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In a midrash on the famous psalm, “By the Waters of Babylon” (Psalm 137), the rabbis of old say that the question “How can we sing a new song on strange land?” was not rhetorical, but literal. The Levites, in their desperation, cut off their thumbs so that they would not be able to play their instruments for the enemy King Nebuchadnezzar (see Rashi on *Kiddushin* 69a). They sat, instead, on the banks of the river and bemoaned their loss. But the midrash alludes to something darker: by cutting off their thumbs, they made themselves ritually unsuitable for serving God in the Temple precincts after their exile (see Leviticus 21:17). Signs of mourning that are permanent can show profound loss but may also reveal a lack of faith in the future.

We have met Jeremiah on many pages here, and might not expect him to offer us a positive prescription for exile. Yet he does. He tells us to become good people, raise good children and be good citizens, no matter where. He also offers us the belief that a stronger people will make a stronger nation when the exile is over and redemption is on the horizon.

Isaiah, too, offers his guidance on rebuilding: *And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall renew the waste cities, the desolations of many generations. (Isaiah 61:4)*

We are the people who rebuild ruins. And when, as the Talmud teaches, we get to heaven and God asks each of us, “Did you work for redemption?” we can each say, “Yes, I did” with a full heart.

***Shabbat Shalom***

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Kahal Joseph Congregation  
Norma & Sam Dabby Jewish Education Center

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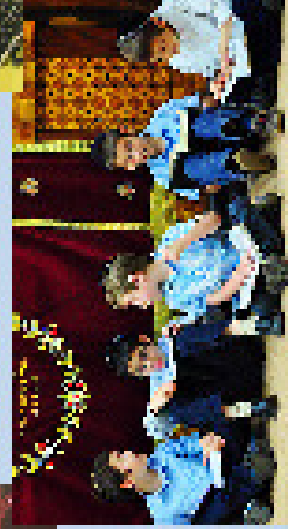
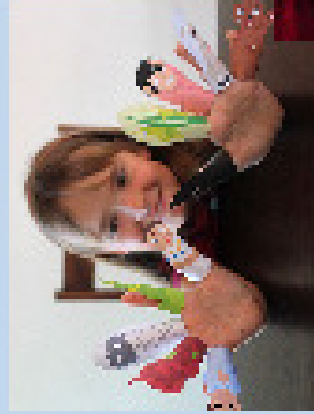
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