

KOL MEVASSER

Sephardic Blessings

By Rabbi Daniel Bouskila, SEC Director

My first memorable experience with Parashat Ki Tavo came when I was a child. My father and I were invited to a Bar Mitzvah in an Ashkenazi synagogue, and the parasha was Ki Tavo. The Bar Mitzvah family was kind enough to honor my father with an aliyah to the Torah, so it was a real shocker to them when my father refused to go up to the Torah. What was the problem? How could my father refuse such an honor?

The aliyah was the sixth aliyah in Parashat Ki Tavo, which contains a description of the most devastating curses in the Torah. In Morocco (where my father grew up), nobody ever wanted that aliyah. It was actually the custom for the community to *pay* someone to take that aliyah! Just imagine – we usually make donations after receiving an aliyah, but for this one aliyah in the year, you had to pay someone to take it.

What's so spooky about this aliyah?

"If you will not listen to the voice of God ... all of these curses shall come upon you and overtake you" (Deuteronomy 28:15).

The aliyah proceeds with 54 verses filled with detailed descriptions of some of the most dark and devastating curses. Understandably, this aliyah has instilled fear and superstition in generations of synagogue goers. In fact, the list is so gloomy, that it is customary for the person reading the Torah to soften his voice and read this section almost silently. Jewish law is even sensitive to this frightening section of the Torah, in that the



schedule of Torah readings on the Jewish calendar is permanently fixed to assure that we always read Parashat Ki Tavo *before* Rosh Hashanah, so that we do not begin the New Year and then go to the synagogue on the Shabbat between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur to hear all of these curses.

Enough with curses. What about blessings? With Rosh Hashanah around the corner, we should all have blessings on our mind. In the Sephardic tradition, we not only think about blessings – we cook them! Sephardim turn blessings into a tasty array of foods on the first night of Rosh Hashanah -- a "feast of blessings."

When we come home from Arvit (evening) services, Sephardim sit around the table and conduct a Rosh Hashanah Seder, eating a wide array of symbolic foods whose theme is rooting out curses and praying for blessings.

We eat pumpkin or gourd, which in Aramaic is called *kra* (in Hebrew the word for "tear up" is also *kra*), and in a play on words, we pray that God will "tear up [*kra*] any evil decrees against us, and let our merits instead be read before God."

We then eat pieces of a fish or lamb's head, and we say, "May we always be the *head*, and not the *tail*" (see Deuteronomy 28:13 -- "*And God will make you the head, and not the tail*").

We then eat dates, leeks and beets. All three foods are eaten accompanied by prayers for the termination of our enemies. The Hebrew word for date is *tamar*, and before eating the date we say "*She-yitamu*

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KJ Schedule Parashat Ki Tavo

Erev Shabbat

Friday, September 12th

Selihot 5:45 am
Shaharit 6:30 am
Minhah/Arbith 6:30 pm
Shabbat Candlelighting 6:45 pm

Shabbat

Saturday, September 13th

Shaharit/Morning Prayer 8:30 am
Minha, Seudah, Arvit 6:30 pm
Motzei Shabbat/Havdallah .. 7:52 pm

Weekdays

Sunday, September 14th

Selihot 6:45 am
Shaharit 7:30 am
Talmud Torah KJ Kids 10:00 am

Monday-Friday, September 15 - 19

Selihot 5:45 am
Shaharit 6:30 am

Erev Shabbat

Friday, September 19th

Selihot 5:45 am
/ Shaharit 6:30 am
Minhah/Arbith 6:30 pm
Shabbat Candlelighting 6:35 pm

Torah & Haftara Readings

Book of Devarim / Deuteronomy
Ki Tavo 859 to 873
Book of Neviim / Prophets
Yishayahu / Isaiah 874 to 877

Shabbat Shalom U'Mevorah

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oyvenu" (May our enemies be consumed; *yitamu* -- consumed -- sounding like *tamar*). The Aramaic term for leeks is *karti*, and before eating the leeks we say "*She-yikartu oyvenu*" (May our enemies be cut off; *yikartu* -- cut off -- sounding like *karti*). The Aramaic word for beets is *silka*, and before eating the beets we say "*She-yisalku oyvenu*" (May our enemies disappear; *yisalku* -- disappear -- sounding like *silka*). These beautiful (and tasty) customs reflect our innermost desire to begin a year void of some of life's brutal curses: strife, conflict and war.

We then eat pomegranate seeds and say "May we be full of mitzvot as a pomegranate is full of seeds" (according to one tradition, there are 613 seeds in a pomegranate). My family has the custom of eating sesame seeds mixed with sugar, and we say, "May our mitzvot be as abundant as sesame seeds, and as sweet as sugar."

As sweet as all of these foods are, we know that the blessings they symbolize are even sweeter.

In Sephardic synagogues, the Arvit (evening) prayers on Rosh Hashanah open with a beautiful liturgical poem – *Ahot Ketanah*. Each stanza of the *Ahot Ketanah* poem concludes by saying "May this year and all of its curses come to an end," and the finale of the poem is "May this coming year with all of its blessings come to a good beginning." As we read Parashat Ki Tavo this coming Shabbat, we do so knowing that we will soon gather in synagogues and around our tables, ushering in the New Year and all of its blessings, thus leaving behind the awful curses of Parashat Ki Tavo.

Tichleh Shanah V'Kileloteha -- May this year and all of its curses come to an end.

Tahel Shanah U'Birchoteha -- May this coming year with all of its blessings come to a good beginning. Shabbat Shalom

Shabbat Kiddush

is sponsored
in memory of

Yaacov ben Aharon Nakar, z"l

by

Ruth & Edmond Hagooli

Kahal Joseph

High Holy Days Tickets

Now's the perfect time to renew or begin your membership. We are a community and our members support wonderful programs for young and old. For information contact Sarah at 310.474.0559. Or, if you have guests or need additional tickets these can be obtained at the rates below:

Guest Adult Tickets—\$300

Teen Tickets, Children 13 to 18—\$150

Wristbands, Children Under 12—\$50

For security reasons, every person entering the building, including infants, must have a ticket. No exceptions.

In Memoriam

We remember these yearzeit anniversaries for September 13 to 20, 2014. It is customary to light a memorial candle, donate tzedaka, & attend services the preceding Shabbat.

18 Elul / Shabbat, September 13th

Rahel bat Rahma Khatoon

19 Elul / Sunday, September 14th

Malek Yehuda Malek bat Yehuda

20 Elul / Monday, September 15th

Jacob Samuel Azar Yaacov Shmuel

22 Elul / Wednesday, September 17th

Violet Ezra

Moselle Jacob Muzli bat Nuna

24 Elul / Friday, September 19th

Daisy Ezra Khazam bat Farha

25 Elul / Shabbat, September 20th

Yosef Acoca Yosef ben Nissim

Sidney Jonah Sasson Ephraim Yonah

Marsel Kemareh Marsel bat Shaul v'Gazala Levi

Refuah Shlemah

Mordechai Cohen / Mordecai ben Avraham

Moselle Amron/Mazal Tov bat Salha Matana

Tilda Levy / Tilda bat Miriam

Joseph Sharaf / Yossef ben Jamila

Maurice Ovadia / Moshe ben Noosha

Michael Herzbrun / Michael Baruch ben Sarah

Saul Sassoon / Shlomo ben Sasson Menashe

Rabbi Daniel Bouskila, Senior Hazzan Sassoon Ezra, Hazzan Saeed Jalali & Guest Hazzan, Yoram Azran Lead KJ High Holy Days 5775

We are pleased to announce our High Holy Day services at KJ. Rabbi Daniel Bouskila will deliver unique and timely sermons on relevant, intriguing topics, bringing deep meaning, stimulating thought, and inspiring purpose to the High Holy Day experience. Rabbi Bouskila will also introduce educational components, inserting explanations that enhance the prayers and their meaning for all our congregants. Joining Rabbi Bouskila will be our Senior Hazzan Sassoon Ezra and Hazzan Saeed Jalali along with Guest Hazzan Yoram Azran from Jerusalem, who officiated for us, together with Rabbi Bouskila, last year on Rosh Hashanah. Their powerful voices will inspire community participation, encouraging our congregants to sing our beautiful melodies together. What a wonderful way to begin our New Year 5775.

Preparing for the High Holy Days: Polishing the Torah Cases

This past Sunday, a dedicated group of men and women volunteered their time in what has become an annual tradition: polishing and cleaning our beautiful and extensive collection of new and vintage Torah scroll cases in anticipation of the High Holy Days. We invite you to share in the joy of this mitzvah through the photo gallery below.



Thank You

To all the wonderful volunteers who polished and cleaned the Torah scroll cases in preparation for Kahal Joseph's High Holy Day services and to those who assisted and supported the volunteers

Rachel Acoca
Louise & David Elias
Sophie & Ben Elias
Shoshana Goury
Barukh Isaac & Rita Zakoo
Louise Nathan
Roya Setarehshenas-Najibi
Penina Meghnagi Solomon
Diana Solomon
Anita Wozniak
Danny Wozniak

and to Shula Wyner, who provided a wonderful lunch and David Kohan who opened the hechal for our volunteers

JIMENA Mizrahi Remembrance Kickoff Reception with David Suissa & Elan Carr

David Suissa

Tuesday, Sept. 16

Elan Carr

7:00PM • Reception
8:00PM • Talk

Studio Bancs
2643 Fairfax Avenue

\$9 donation
JIMENA.ORG

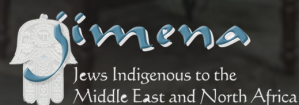
Community Advocate
Native of Casablanca
President, TRIBE Media Corp/Jewish Journal

Deputy District Attorney
US Army Vet, 2 Tours in Iraq
Congressional Candidate, 33rd District

RSVP: natalie@jimena.org

With Mizrahi Remembrance Month launching in conjunction with Israel's first-ever Day of Mizrahi Commemoration, JIMENA is planning a series of events to honor the history and culture of Jews from Arab countries and Iran.

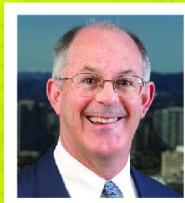
Join JIMENA at the headquarters of the Sephardic Music Festival for the kickoff event. Guests will enjoy a lively Middle Eastern-inspired cocktail hour, with kosher wine from Israel, Middle Eastern appetizers, and a dance-performance followed by remarks from two of Los Angeles's most respected Mizrahi leaders.



Save the Date 12TH LOS ANGELES SEPHARDIC JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL OPENING GALA

NOVEMBER 9, 2014
PARAMOUNT PICTURES STUDIOS

Silent Auction
Dinner Buffet
Award Presentation
Film Competition
Feature Film Screening
Dessert Reception



Ronald J. Nessim
Maimonides
Leadership Award



Yehoram Gaon
Cinema Sepharad
Lifetime Achievement Award



Joelle & Jack Rimokh
Sephardic
Legacy Award

Screenings November 10-16 at Laemmle's Music Hall Theater

Films depicting the Sephardic Jewish experience from India, Morocco, Iraq, Rhodes, Iran, Turkey, Spain and more

VISIT WWW.SEPHARDICFILMFESTIVAL.COM

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Jewish Heritage & History Hebrew for Prayer Torah Stories Holiday Traditions
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