

KOL MEVASSER

Rabbi's Message

As our Patriarch Jacob is called from Israel to Egypt in Parashat Vayigash, I often think of a more modern Jacob who visited Egypt under parallel circumstances in the 19th century. Though he is closer to our time than his Biblical counterpart, the name of Rabbi Jacob Saphir is far less recognized. In devoting this article to his story, I also hope to probe a curious episode in our history with larger implications for Jewish morality.



Rabbi Saphir was born in Oshmene (today's Belarus near Lithuania) in 1822. When he was 10 his family made aliya and joined the Ashkenazim in Safed. Tragically his parents passed during his teens, leaving him to be educated as an orphan in Jerusalem. He showed acumen for yeshiva studies, working his way up through the ranks of the Perushim (Lithuanian Ashkenazim) until he became their Executive Director.

Starting in the 1840s, the Perushim began dispatching him as a special emissary called a "Shadar," whose duty was to collect funds for Erets Yisrael. The Jewish economy in Israel was precarious, and would have collapsed without external capital. Just as the Biblical Jacob sent to Egypt from Canaan for support, so too did his successors in the Old Yishuv find it necessary to solicit contributions from abroad.

At a time when global communication was expensive and difficult, Shadarim brought disconnected Jewish communities back into each other's consciousness by traveling between them. Yet Rabbi Saphir stood out above the rest by publishing a stand-alone ethnography of

the Jews whom he visited. Known by the eponymous title *Even Sapir*, his two-volume opus describes mid-19th century Jewish communities in Egypt, Yemen, South and Southeast Asia, and Oceania. His account of India's Jews makes the book an important primary source for our own congregational history at Kahal Joseph.

Returning to Vayigash, the chapter about his visit to Alexandria raises complex issues that reach back through time to the Jews' history of slavery in Egypt. In 1858, Rabbi Saphir encountered a diverse Sephardi community, whom he divided into the traditional Arabized poor and the modern Westernizing elites. Describing the latter with a touch of disappointment, he notes their abandonment of Jewish languages in favor of Italian, and expresses surprise that they owned black slaves to serve in their homes.

It is this paragraph addressing Jewish slave ownership that is so jarring to modern sensibilities. While illegal slavery continues today in Egypt, in Rabbi Saphir's day it was practiced openly and with the blessing of the law. I can hardly imagine what Pesah was like for modern Jews holding a seder in the literal land of Egypt, complete with a meal that was served by actual slaves!

The Torah's laws replace the victimizing institution of chattel slavery with a much softer indenture system. The natural endpoint of that moral track would seem to be the abolishment of slavery altogether, and we tend to take that for granted until finding cases like this in our own recent past. While I accept that we must judge it through the lens of the time, I invite you to join me in a tikkun for this story: choose an organization devoted to victims of human trafficking and demonstrate what the Jews really think of it today.

Parashat Vayigash

Guest Speaker Rabbi Joobin Shemtov

Torah: Gen. 44:18–47:27, 106 Pesukim

Hertz 169–177; Stone 250–267

Haftara: Ezek. 37:15–28

Hertz 178–179; Stone 1144–1145

Tefillot: Mashiv Haruah, Birkat Halevana

Asara Betevet

"Our brothers, the whole House of Israel, take heed! The Fast of the Tenth Month will be this Tuesday – may God turn it into a day of gladness and rejoicing!"

KJ Schedule

Erev Shabbat

Friday, December 14th

Shabbat Candle lighting.....	4:26 pm
Minha	4:15 pm
Kabbalat Shabbat & Arvit.....	4:45 pm

Yom Shabbat

Saturday, December 15th

Shaharit	8:30 am
Keriat HaTorah	10:15 am
Guest Speaker, Rabbi Shemtov.....	11:20 am
Musaf.....	11:30 am
Women's Tehillim	right after kiddush

Minha.....	3:45 pm
Seuda Shelisheet.....	4:30 pm
Arvit	5:15 pm
Havdala	5:29 pm

Sunday, December 16th

Shaharit.....	7:30 am
Talmud Torah	9:45 am

(Continued on page 2)

Mazal Tov

**Daniel Goury
on your Bar Mitsva**

Besiman Tov to

Father

Ronny Goury

Sisters

Maya & Yael

Grandparents

Shoshanna & Shaul Goury

We take special joy in the fact that Daniel read the entire Parasha, including the extra readings from two additional Sefarim, with accuracy and aplomb!

(Continued from page 1)

Mon, Dec 17th, Wed-Fri, Dec 19th-21st
Shaharit 6:25 am

Asara Betevet

Tuesday, December 18th

Fast begins 5:33 am
Shaharit 6:05 am
Minha w/Birkat Kohanim..... 4:00 pm
Fast ends (Sephardim)..... 5:08 pm
Fast ends (those who wait) 5:28 pm

Next Shabbat

Friday-Saturday, Dec 21-22

Shabbat Candle lighting 4:29 pm
Friday Minha 4:15 pm
Shaharit 8:30 am
Saturday Minha 3:45 pm
Havdala..... 5:33 pm

Mazal Tov

Congratulations to the Westwood Kehilla on their dedication of a new Torah in memory of Bette Meyers, z"l.

The Hakhnasa celebration lasted all day Sunday, and included a joyful procession through the streets of Westwood that passed by Kahal.



KJ Guest Speaker Rabbi Joobin Shemtov

Shabbat Day, 12/15

Rabbi Joobin Aaron Shemtov served as rabbi and hazzan of the Iraqi Jewish Association in Toronto, and worked for the Associated Hebrew

Schools there for more than a decade. For over 14 years, he has been involved with Jewish and Persian communities in California, and has led High Holy Day services for the **Elite Entrepreneur Organization** and the **Iranian American Jewish Cultural Organization** for the past 8 years.

Born in Tehran, Rabbi Shemtov immigrated as a young man to Vienna, where he performed as a hazzan. In 1998, he moved to Toronto, where he became involved in Jewish, Israeli and *kiruv* communities. He supported Israel through organizations such as NCSY, Sephardic Outreach, and Birthright. He graduated from York University with honors and received *semikha* from *Yeshivat Mikdash Melech* in Jerusalem.

Rabbi Shemtov is married to Daniela and together they have three children: Shyli, Lielle, and their newest addition, Liam Natanel.

Appreciation

Thank you to Daniel Shaye for the Hanukiya, the oil and the wicks that we used for Hanukkah.

In Memoriam

We remember these *yahrzeit* anniversaries from December 15 to 22, 2018. We light memorial candles, donate *tzedaka* & attend Shabbat services to honor the memory of our loved ones.

7 Tevet / Shabbat, December 15th

Eliezer David Levy *Eliezer ben David Halevi*

8 Tevet / Sunday, December 16th

Abraham Khazzoom

Rabbi Elias Levi *Eliyahu Hayim ben Shlomo Halevi*

Max Nathan *Mordechai ben Rafael Natan*

David Sassoon Solomon *David Sasson ben Shlomo Reuven*

9 Tevet / Monday, December 17th

Eddie Jacob Ezra *Yehezkel ben Yaacov Azoori*

10 Tevet / Tuesday, December 18th

Shalom Kamara *Shalom ben Menashe Kamara*
Hayim Baruch Shalom Mingail *Hayim Baruch ben Shalom*

13 Tevet / Friday, December 21st

Ester Avrahami *Ester bat Gazala*
Fortuna Sinder *Fortuna bat Suzan*

Refua Shelema

Sassoon Ezra • Moselle Amron • Sally Amron
Sylvia Cohen • Esther Duke • Mehry bat Miriam
Hakimipour • Tilda Levy • Yvonne Moalim • Florice
Newberry • Aliza bat Rahel • Aliza bat Victoria
Arlette bat Rashel • Chaya Chana bat Batya • Katie
bat Farha • Malka bat Rahel • Miriam bat Yetta
Miryam bat Malka • Moshe Ezra ben MazalTov
Simcha bat Rooha • Habiba bat Farha • Meir Ezra ben
Rahel • Dina bat Rahel • Chaya Rachel bat Simcha
Rahel bat Ramah Regina • Eti Esther bat Fortuna



Above: Candlelighting and waffles at the Young Professionals Hanukkah party

Below: Torah scrolls abound at morning minyan during Hanukkah!



Prayers of the Heart

Getting to Know the Shabbat Morning Tefilla

Part 1: The Origins of the Siddur

The practice of Jewish worship developed quite a bit before taking the form we know today. In the Torah, it appears only as a general requirement to “serve” God. The Rabbis of the Talmud interpreted that “this service means prayer,” and thus the act of praying is counted as one of the 613 commandments (Sifre Devarim 42; Sefer Hamitsvot, Aseh #5).

Early on, our prayers were much more free-form, reflecting the individual circumstances of each person or community. Yet after the Jews were exiled to Babylonia, a group of Prophets and leaders called the Great Assembly began to establish a standardized liturgy to hold the people together. Recalling the lost Temple, they fixed a cycle of three daily prayers, each held at a time one of the sacrifices was offered (Berakhot 26b; Yad Hazaka, Hilkhot Tefila 1).

Since then, all services have revolved around the Amida, a formal rubric of praises, thanksgiving, and requests of God. On weekdays it is recited in its baseline form, which is altered on special occasions to suit. Over many centuries, the prayers around it expanded so much that they had to be recorded in a special book called a Siddur, or “ordering” of prayers.

The earliest surviving Siddurim are from 9th century Iraq. As far-flung communities received and adapted them, they fractured into regional rites called Minhagim. The “Sephardic” prayer books that we use at Kahal came about when the historical Spanish Minhag was infused with the 16th century Kabbalistic teachings of Rabbi Isaac Luria. Its wild popularity in the Ottoman Empire tended to replace and erase older rites such as the Babylonian and Persian Minhagim.

Modern Jewish worshipers who follow these rites are now left with a benefit and a challenge. On the one hand, the prayers are elegantly laid out in florid language, making it easy to address God respectfully. On the other, they are conducted in Hebrew and with a great deal of repetition, so that worshipers must urge themselves to renew their sense of awe.

We need your help!

Keep the Iraqi Jewish Archives in the US

On May 6, 2003, just days after the Coalition forces took over Baghdad, 16 US soldiers entered the flooded building of Saddam Hussein's Intelligence agency, the Mukhabarat. In the basement, under four feet of water, they found tens of thousands of books, artifacts and documents belonging to the Jewish community of Iraq – materials that had been seized from synagogues, schools and other institutions.

The archive includes a 400-year-old Torah, a book of sermons from 1692, a 200-year-old Talmud, and thousands of books printed all over the Jewish world, as well as the writings of the late 19th century Baghdadi interpreter of Jewish Law, Rabbi Yossef Hayim, known as the Ben Ish Hai. The collection was moved to the US with the agreement of the Iraqi Ministry of Culture and painstakingly restored, preserved and digitized by the National Archives and Records Administration at great cost.

However, in the last several years, the Iraqi government has been asking for the archives back. There is a coalition of Jewish organizations, of which Kahal Joseph is one, as well as a bipartisan group of politicians working tirelessly to ensure that the archive remains in the United States where its protection can be guaranteed, and it can be accessible to the community from whom it was stolen.

As you might expect, these efforts come at a cost. Please consider donating to keep the IJA in the US – every dollar counts, and time is of the essence. Donate online at www.kahaljoseph.org/iraqi-archives or you can send a check into Kahal with the note "Keep the IJA in the US."

Yvette Dabby
President, Kahal Joseph



Parashat Vayechi - December 22

One of the more sensitive topics of discussion is that of the Torah perspective on end-of-life matters. The Traditional End-of-Life Awareness Movement (TEAM) is a national movement dedicated to generating positive awareness, educating and guiding the Jewish community on the value of life and making appropriate end-of-life decisions.

As a project of the National Association of Chevra Kadisha (NASCK) under the direction of Rabbi Elchonon Zohn, TEAM Shabbos is dedicating Shabbat Parshat Vayechi to spark conversation regarding these issues.

With the help of over 400 Rabbis and congregations across the country, TEAM Shabbos hope to reach the full spectrum of the national Jewish Orthodox community and utilize this teachable moment. Each community will devote either a Shabbat sermon, lecture or other program to these important and timely topics.

Kahal Joseph is a proud participant in this program, and Rabbi Melhado looks forward to addressing these important issues from the teba.