

# KOL MEVASSER

## Rabbi's Message

The morality of the Ten Plagues in Egypt is difficult to understand at first blush. God foretells that He will “harden Pharaoh’s heart” against letting us go, a decision that maximizes the Egyptians’ suffering. According to the Talmudic sage Ribbi Yehuda, the abbreviation for all ten plagues was already inscribed on Moshe’s staff when he received it at the burning bush. The fact that this was well before Moshe even met Pharaoh suggests that Pharaoh may not have enjoyed the choice of free will during this story. (Shemot Rabba, 5:6).

If that were the last word, it would indeed appear unjust that God could force Pharaoh into a series of actions that would inflict intense hardship on his kingdom. However, two mitigating factors invert this conclusion and put the responsibility for the plagues squarely on Pharaoh and his followers.

Regarding Pharaoh himself, we see that the “hardening of the heart” was entirely his decision up through the fifth Plague (Ex. 7:13 & 22; 8:11, 15 & 28; 9:7). It is only from the sixth that God assists Pharaoh in hardening his heart, which many commentators interpret as simply “giving Pharaoh the strength to keep resisting *if he wanted to*” (Tosafot Hashalem - Shemot 4:21:8). Indeed, God actually went out of His way to warn Pharaoh before each plague, allowing him to make a fully free choice between disobedience and repentance (Shemot Rabba 9:9).

When it comes to his subjects, the Torah provides a few key clues that the Egyptian nation had personal volition in enacting Pharaoh’s



cruelty. When Pharaoh asks Moshe and Aharon to have God call off the plague of hail, he admits that “God is correct, and I *and my nation* are in the wrong.” Confirming this evaluation of the people’s will, the Torah explains that after the hail ceased, Pharaoh “persisted in sinning; his heart grew hard, he *and all his servants*” (Ex. 9:27 & 34). Finally, at the Sea of Reeds, it reports that “the hearts of Pharaoh *and his servants*” turned towards the Israelites to re-enslave us (Ex. 14:5).

We can thus conclude that the Ten Plagues were visited upon a deserving audience, but that still raises the question of what these penalties were supposed to achieve. If a nation and its leader simply sinned and was punished, does this merit millennia of commemorations and pride of place in two parashiyot of the Torah? Is it enough to fuel the identity-building that happens at our Sedarim, or to explain the many mitsvot that are presented as “remembrances of the Exodus”?

Instead, the Torah explains that God enacted the Plagues so that global society would develop spiritually. One of the recurring tropes of the Plague narrative is the idea that “Egypt shall recognize that I am God” (as in Ex. 7:5). If a premier civilization could publicly accept the realness of the One True Creator, it would be a major turning point in worldwide consciousness of the divine. The flip side of that goal is to reawaken that same belief in our own Jewish hearts after it was dulled by the experience of slavery (as in Ex. 10:2). The legacy of this moment can still be felt today: while our ancestors struggled to introduce monotheism to an uncomprehending society, we can celebrate the fact that a significant portion of gentiles the world over believes in the One God, creator of Heaven and Earth!

## Parashat Va'era First Seven Plagues

Torah: Ex. 6:2–9:35, 121 Pesukim  
Hertz 232–244; Stone 318–339  
Haftara: Ezek. 28:25–29:21  
Hertz 244–247; Stone 1149–1150  
Tefillot: Mashiv Haruah, Hakhrizat  
Shevat (Mon)

**Reminder:** Minha times have begun moving later. We try to adjust them in increments of fifteen minutes so that we can keep them the same for at least 2 weeks running.

## KJ Schedule

### Erev Shabbat

Friday, January 4th

Shabbat Candle lighting.....	4:38 pm
Minha .....	4:30 pm
Kabbalat Shabbat & Arvit.....	5:00 pm

### Yom Shabbat

Saturday, January 5th

Shaharit .....	8:30 am
Keriat HaTorah .....	10:15 am
Sermon.....	11:20 am
Musaf.....	11:30 am
Women's Tehillim .....	right after kiddush

Minha.....	4:00 pm
Seuda Shelisheet.....	4:45 pm
Arvit .....	5:30 pm
Havdala .....	5:43 pm

Sunday, January 6th

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

(Continued on page 2)



## Shabbat Kiddush

is sponsored  
in loving memory of

**Khorshid Farahi, z"l**  
&  
**Houshang Melamed, z"l**

by  
Cici Hallegua  
& Bahareh Aslemand

## Volunteers!

### KJ Wants You

KJ needs individuals with data entry skills to compile a database, using a provided template, for azkara/yahrzeit information collected from community records.

This task does not require being physically present at Kahal. It may be completed from your home, using your computer.

Skills required: familiarity w/Excel, ability to pronounce/read Hebrew & English.

For information contact Rabbi Melhado at  
[rabbimelhado@kahaljoseph.org](mailto:rabbimelhado@kahaljoseph.org)

## Condolences

With sorrow we send our deepest condolences to the family and friends of

### Salhab Harouni, z"l

*Salhab bat Tavoos and Yaacov* (1931-2018). She passed away Thursday, December 27th 2018, the 19th of Tevet.

#### She is survived by her siblings

Reihan Davidoff  
Ashraf Davidoff  
Farah Bani Israeli

#### her children

Yafah (Akbal) Tabibi  
Aryeh (Helen) Harouni  
Eddie (Angel) Harouni

#### 21 grandchildren, 22 great-grandchildren extended family and friends.

She was predeceased by her husband, Immanuel Hakohen Harouni, z"l.

Our thoughts & prayers go out to her family and loved ones. May they be comforted with all the mourners of Tsion. *Min hashamayim tenuhamu.*

*(Continued from page 1)*

### Rosh Hodesh Shevat

*Monday, January 7th*

Shaharit..... 6:05 am

### Weekdays

*Tuesday-Friday, January 8th to 11th*

Shaharit..... 6:25 am

### Next Shabbat

*Friday-Saturday, January 11-12*

Shabbat Candle lighting..... 4:44 pm  
Friday Minha..... 4:30 pm  
Shaharit..... 8:30 am  
Saturday Minha ..... 4:00 pm  
Havdala ..... 5:49 pm

## In Memoriam

We remember these yahrzeit anniversaries from January 5 to 12, 2019. We light memorial candles, donate tzedaka & attend Shabbat services to honor the memory of our loved ones.

### 28 Tevet / Shabbat, January 5th

*Aziza bat Amam*

Maurice Zekaria Moshe ben Seon

### 29 Tevet / Sunday, January 6th

Mollie Einy Konigsberg *Mazal tov bat Masooda*

### 1 Shevat / Monday, January 7th

Mozelle Solomon *Mozly bat Haviva*

### 2 Shevat / Tuesday, January 8th

Joseph Haghighi *Yosef ben Ezra*  
Mahboobeh Haykani

Samuel Sheff *Shlomo ben Binyamin*  
Albert Zekaria *Abdullah ben Seon*

### 4 Shevat / Thursday, January 10th

Khorshid Farzaneh Farahi

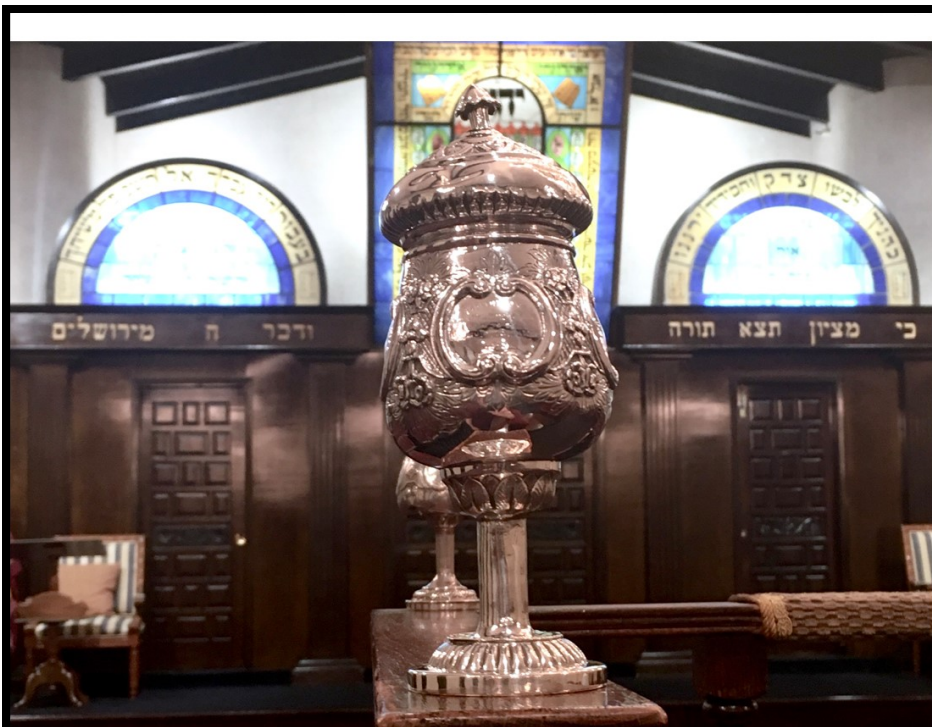
### 6 Shevat / Shabbat, January 12th

Albert Gaub Avner Abraham ben Khatoon  
Maurice Jacob Jonah Maurice ben Yaacov

## 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





## Rimon Returned: It takes a village!

For more than four years, one of the six rimonim from India on our Teba has been missing. Kahal celebrates its restoration, and thanks the many people who had a hand in bringing it back to its former glory!

Rabbi Melhado noticed that it was gone when he interviewed in January 2015. After he was invited to be our Rabbi, he found the broken-off top portion of the rimon in the back of the Ekhal. Sometime either before or after this, our then-custodian Jose Anguiano found the broken off bottom and misidentified it as a tool. In 2018, Penina Meghnagi Solomon recognized it in his tool box and brought it to Rabbi Melhado. He in turn gave it to Yvette Dabby, who had it restored at Royale Silver Co. Meanwhile, Saeed Jalali installed its dowel on the Teba, and the rimon sparkled on its new perch starting last Shabbat!

# Prayers of the Heart

## Getting to Know the Shabbat Morning Tefilla

### Part IV – The Amida of Shaharit

Every prayer service in Judaism revolves around the Amida, a series of blessings in which we stand before God and address Him directly. The

Amida is so essential that it is synonymous with the word “Tefilla” (prayer) in Rabbinic Hebrew. Even after the congregation says it silently, the Hazan repeats it aloud to include those who cannot manage it on their own.

On weekdays, the same Amida text is recited in each of the three services, with only the surrounding prayers being different. On the High Holy Days and Festivals, the middle section is altered to suit the holiday, and an extra Amida called “Musaf” is added after Shaharit. Only on Shabbat is there a unique middle text for each of the four Amidot: Arvit, Shaharit, Musaf, and Minha.

All Amidot follow the same opening lines in order to create the right mindset. In the blessing of “Avot,” we highlight our national covenant with God that goes all the way back to our ancestors, the founders of Judaism. We then reflect in awe at God’s might in the blessing of “Gevurot,” and burst into songs of His sanctity at the Kedusha.

After this, the main text opens by effusing at how much of a gift it feels like to have Shabbat. The Torah reports that the Israelites observed it from the very first Sabbath day possible (Ex. 31:16-17), not missing even one week. We declare that our people has always appreciated this, and we hope that He will notice our observance today and bless us.

Having thus poured out our hearts with the distinctive prayer of Shabbat morning, the final three blessings are again common to all Amidot, and serve to bring us back to earth. We express the hope that God will heed our prayers, just as He may one day do in a reestablished Holy Temple.

We thank Him for everything He has already done for us in the meantime, and we sign off with the plea that peace may one day fill the universe. May we live to see it happen!



*The Norma & Sam Dabby  
Talmud Torah invites you*

**Tu Bishvat Community Hike  
Will Rogers State Park  
Sunday, January 20**

*10:00 AM - Inspirational Hike  
11:30 AM - Community Picnic*

**Join the Talmud Torah for a special  
enrichment day at Will Rogers State Park  
to learn about and celebrate Tu Bishvat.**

**Don't miss this wonderful lesson on  
nature and its role in Judaism!**

**Meet at the parking lot at Will Rogers**

*Please bring your lunch, water,  
sunglasses, sunscreen, hats, hiking  
clothes & shoes and your sense of fun!*

**RSVP to Mora Molly at  
[molly@emetek.com](mailto:molly@emetek.com)**

**Save the Date!**

## **Adult Bat Mitzvah**

**Saturday, February 9  
4 Adar I, 5779**

**Parashat Teruma**

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**Ladies are invited  
to the  
upstairs synagogue  
for a  
Torah service  
to celebrate  
the**

**Adult Bat Mitzvah class's  
momentous achievement!**

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**Celebratory Kiddush to  
follow in the Social Hall**