

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

TERUMAH

FEBRUARY 16, 2013

6 ADAR 5773

DEDICATIONS: In memory of Ezra ben Farha – Isadore Dayan – 6 Adar

REFUAH SHELEMAH: Rabbi Yosef Galimidi - Yosef ben Farha

Please print copies for distribution to your friends in the Synagogue this Shabbat – Need a volunteer!

SEPHARDIC CONGREGATION OF LONG BEACH SCHEDULE
Candle Lighting - 5:11pm / Mincha / Kabbalat Shabbat - 5:15pm

Shacharit Shabbat Morning - 9:00am

This week's Kiddush is sponsored by Yusupov family in memory of Simcha ben Shlomo
And we'll be honored to hear from Sam Yusupov who will be giving this week's derasha in memory of his
grandfather and namesake. Chazak U Baruch Sam.

Mincha Shabbat Day - 12:20 – Amidah after 12:36pm
Shabbat Ends - 6:10pm - Arvit - 6:30pm
Followed by Children's program with Pizza and B'H a class

Daily Services - Shacharit

Sunday- 8:00am / This Monday probably 8:00AM Tuesday thru Friday - 7:00am SHARP

Mazel Tov Jessica and Sam Pinto on the birth of their daughter!
Mazel Tov to Avi Nachamias on his bar mitzvah!

Class with Rabbi Yenay Monday night at 7PM –

Purim is Saturday night February 23rd
Anyone who wants to volunteer please let Rabbi Colish know
Tentative Schedule ... We will return for Arbit and Megilah at 7:15
Dairy dinner following the reading of the megila.
Lots of fun for the kids with face painting, purim skit, and arts and crafts.
\$100 Amazon gift certificate for the best costume – child or adult!

Our Sisterhood dinner this year will be held February 27th at Chosen Island
and our Guest of Honor will be---Lisa Gaon!!Reserve the date and invite your friends -
Remember this dinner is for men too!

On Saturday night, March 2, 2013, The Sephardic Congregation Of Long Beach will host a talk by Dr. Reeva Simon entitled "Jews and Islam: An Inconsistent Relationship. From the Golden Age to Modern Times." Dr. Simon is a former Associate Director of The Middle East Institute at Columbia University and professor of Middle East history at Columbia and Yeshiva Universities and the author of a number of books on the topic
Dr. Simon's talk will begin at 8pm, with a reception to follow. Suggested donation is \$10.

See More from the Synagogue Below

We are hoping to raise money this year as we do every year for Maot Chittim. We will be working with Howie Lebowitz and the Jewish Aid Committee (of Brooklyn) who have been distributing packages to the needy for Pesach for over 40 years. They are discrete and want to help. They are currently working with Lisa Gaon of Met council for the LB and Oceanside areas. If you know

anyone who needs help please send an email to Rabbi@BenaiAsher.org or be in touch with Lisa or Rebetzin Ida.

The package consists of 2 chickens (raw) 3 lbs Matzoh, Matzoh Meal, Farfel, eggs, soup, soup nuts, grape juice, jam, spices, borscht, oil , horseradish and a whole host of other kosher for Passover

products. (Sorry no kibbeh!) Some of the products are donated, but most they have to pay for. If you know of food companies that can help with filling our packages, please let us know. They plan to deliver to 300 families this year. They are a strictly volunteer organization and there is no admin overhead whatsoever.

They are packing packages with G-d's help, Saturday night March 16th, and delivering them on Sunday March 17th 2013 from their "base" at Cong. B'nai Israel / Mesivta Be'er Ha'golah Institute, 671 Louisiana Ave, Brooklyn, NY (Starret City). Again, any help, money, food, bodies to help deliver, pack, or to deliver to etc is appreciated. Contact Howie Lebowitz [howie.lebowitz@gmail.com].

Elie Hecht of Labor & Industry For Education, Inc.(LIFE), which is a local not for profit whose Executive Director is Rabbi Simcha Lefkowitz reminded us that they offer 2 programs which they believe can be a tremendous benefit to local families. They are located at 112 Spruce Street, Cedarhurst, 516-374-4564.

1. They are funded by the NYS Attorney General to provide free Hurricane Sandy assistance. They will be helping people who are having difficulty with their insurance companies, FEMA and/or their lenders who are holding up their insurance checks.

2. They are also funded by the NYS Attorney General to provide free mortgage foreclosure prevention – this includes working with home owners in distress by representing them with their lenders. They attempt to assist them in obtaining modifications, refinances and other types of relief, and have been successfully doing this for the people of the Five Towns and Far Rockaway for four years.

Congratulations to Bobby and Hindy Mizrahi who were honored by Ohel on Sunday night. I wasn't able to get there. Hope someone enjoyed my dinner, but I did get to read Hindy's amazing speech. Here is a copy for you.

We are here tonight to show our appreciation to Ohel for all that they do for the community. Their many programs, including foster care, in-home services, mental health and elder care services, have all filled a void that once existed in the community. In today's day and age, where people are often only viewed as a body with a price tag, it is hard to find an organization, hospital or government agency that looks at people and sees a soul. But Ohel does. When a person comes to them for help they don't focus on how much money will be spent, but rather on how to make this individual, this soul's life better.

What better way to support them than by attending their annual Gala and helping them raise the funds for their many causes.

In addition to the many services that Ohel provides they also work to educate the community on the many challenges we all face; challenges that people may feel ashamed of, feel the need to hide, or make them feel alone.

Why are my husband and I one of tonight's honorees? Why am I here at the podium?

Because like all of you, I have a story. But my story and Ohel are heavily intertwined. I would like to share my story so that hopefully you will feel enlightened and educated and if you are one of the people with a similar story, you won't feel ashamed or alone.

My story begins with a family of K"eh 11 who have received so much from Ohel. Community rehabilitation, residential rehabilitation and an Ohel Bais Ezra home established for four of my brothers. Therefore, I am looked at with both awe and skepticism. I am someone to socialize with and befriend but not someone to get too close to or even marry, because my genes are considered blemished. My special brothers, who I would not trade for anything in the world, are considered imperfect and defective. I have seen people believe that they can dictate to G-d which challenges in life they want, but I have learned that G-d only gives what he knows we can handle. It is up to us to rise to the occasion.

Let me tell you the rest of my story. The story of what it is like growing up with 4 developmentally disabled brothers 2 "regular" brothers and 4 "regular" sisters.

I am told that there is such a thing as sibling rivalry. That siblings are jealous of one another, or fight so much they can hurt one another physically and mentally. I wouldn't know. Because in my family of 11 we never fought, were never jealous and certainly never used words like moron, stupid or crazy. We defended each other. We cheered each other on. We knew from a young age what challenges really meant. While some may poke fun at you for reading funny or not reading fast enough, we knew there were those who couldn't read at all. So we coached each other, gave each other tips, and tried to help each other succeed. When a friend came over to play and another sibling wanted to play along, we let them because we saw the hurt when one of our brothers waited for a friend to play with but no one came. We were good to our friends, too. When we were captain

of a sports team, or brought our ball to play with at recess, we made sure everyone who wanted to play got picked for a team, no matter their ability because we saw and felt rejection when one of our brothers sat on the side lines day after day wishing to participate in a game. When we were counselors and color war captains, we made sure each person had a place and felt included; because we saw our brothers fight with everything they had to be included and be just like everyone else. We saw as young kids what it really meant for parents to want their kids to be the best that THEY could be and not what parents wanted. Who would have believed that my father, prominent orthodox rabbi of a large illustrious community, and my mother, daughter of a world renowned rosh hayeshiva, would send 4 of their 6 boys to public school and set their goals as simply saying shema and brochot every morning, slowly and clearly, and to greet everyone they meet with a nice Shalom and strong handshake while looking them in the eye. We learned what responsibility as a parent really meant, as my parents made sure to get up and daven with my brothers every morning and to say krias shema with them every night. Even today, when they live in an Ohel home they still daven with them, never relying on others to do what they believe needs to be done. We were reminded daily of the proper way to treat our parents as our brothers always listened to what my parents said, never spoke back to them or talked in a disrespectful manner. If I ever stepped out of line, even before my parents had a chance to discipline me it was one of my special brothers who would say "Hindy, that is not the way you talk to a mother!" and how can you argue with someone who has limited intellect and is right? We learned that when a sibling starts singing in a busy street on a rainy day in April it's nothing to be embarrassed about. In fact, we could be happy for him that he made the connection of "April showers bring May flowers," something we probably all understood right away but took him longer to comprehend. More importantly, there was nothing any sibling could do to embarrass us, despite the many stares and comments we endured, because we experienced very early on, that being different still offers something unique to the family. In our home, there was never a bad morning because every morning meant a new day, a new beginning; something to look forward to. Monday mornings were especially exciting because Monday and morning both started with the letter M. We knew the importance of structure because structure has a way of keeping things in line and manageable. But we learned very early on that life is unpredictable and you can plan and hope but humans and children are not robots and things sometimes happen or change, just because. We learned how to make sacrifices.

Yes, it hurt that I couldn't get a cabbage patch doll when all my friends had one, but if it meant my brother got an extra physical therapy lesson and he could now ride a bike - I was excited for him and I learned to play with my friend's doll. Lastly, and probably most importantly I learned the true meaning of love. I learned what it means to love someone and not see their faults and to love with no strings attached because in my brothers' eyes I am perfect; they love me for being me and expect nothing back. They are truly excited to see me every time I see them or they see a friend of mine. They call me daily to say hello, yet when they meet someone who knows me they will ask them to send me their regards; Because I am their sister, their perfect older sister.

This past summer we suffered the death of one of my special brothers, Moishe. A friend of mine, who hadn't had the opportunity to meet Moishe, commented that he never saw grown men cry at a funeral like they did at Moishe's. A thousand people were at his funeral, a few hundred at his grave side; many cancelled their vacations to be around for shiva, as they mourned and felt Moishe's loss; but only 12 people sat shiva because we were his kin. We were special.

So the next time you meet someone who looks funny or acts funny, whose mental capacity is different, remember they are not just a physical body with a gene or two that went wrong. They have a special story to tell. They have a unique story to share. Get to know them. Get to know their parents and their siblings. You will be transformed. You will be inspired. You will become special.

This story has been my story for over thirty years, but many events happened these past few years that heightened the fact that I have a special story. A story that needed to be told.

So when Ohel approached my husband Bobby and me for the third time to be honorees I realized I couldn't say no again. What better place to share my story than at an Ohel dinner, when Ohel is responsible for writing the next chapter of my brothers' lives? Growing up I always wondered what would happen with my brothers when my parents could no longer care for them. Would my siblings and I be able to care for them like my parents did? Would we be able to give them the love and security that made them so happy?

Now I don't have to worry because I know they are in good hands. At their home in Ohel Bais Ezra, they are people not numbers. They have healthy meals; go on outings, trips and summer vacation. They go to

work or programs and they are surrounded by caring staff. They even got to pick the paint color of their bedroom before they moved in. And when tragedy struck our family, Ohel was there to help in every way they could whether it was doctor appointments, overnight hospital stays, or even breaking the sad news to my brothers the right way. Ohel has laughed with us and cried with us. They have shared in our joys and in our sorrow.

But this is not an honor that belongs to me alone. It is an honor I share with my siblings.

My "special" siblings because they helped make me who I am today. They made me worthy of receiving such an honor.

It is an honor I share with my "regular" siblings because it is their story, too. The same but different as we were all effected differently based on our placement in the family and/or gender.

It is an honor I share with my husband, sibling-in-laws and their parents because they didn't see us as damaged goods but rather as siblings of a beautiful story. A story they have come to love and accept as their own.

It is an honor I share with my grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and dear friends because they realized a story like this can't blossom in a vacuum and they have each reached out and helped in their own way, some even taking ownership for parts of the story.

It is an honor that I give to my parents, Rabbi and Rebitzan Reisman, the true owners of the story. They are the master story tellers. Thirty plus years ago, when situations like this were kept hidden in the closet and not talked about, they realized they had a beautiful story to tell and brought it to the forefront. It is through them that this wonderful story all takes place. It is a credit to their outlook and acceptance of life and their guidance through life that a small story of young children became a grand story of grown adults.

It is an honor that I, along with my parents and siblings, thank G-d for, for he has chosen us, to be the vehicle, from which to tell, his special story.

Thank you for Ohel for all that you provide my family, the comfort, the care, the peace of mind. Thank you Ohel for allowing me to share my story and thank you all for listening.

The New Synagogue Newsletter is out: For those who wish to be added to the new Synagogue newsletter, send an email to rabbi@benaiasher.org requesting that you be added to the new list and we will forward your email to David Pinto. Thanks to those who responded already. We have forwarded your requests to David.

In the future you can send directly to David Pinto at DavidPinto@SephardicNews.com For those who do not respond you will continue to get Shabbat Shalom as you have in the past.

Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue, 17th Floor, Artistic Frame at 5PM – NEW TIME TIL WE CHANGE THE CLOCK. We need help, Please join us! 212-289-2100

A great engagement, shower or wedding gift: Cooking lessons with a trained professional chef. Email: MikhaylaBB@gmail.com.

We missed last week's newsletter (If you want a copy let me know as it was completed late and not sent to most of you). But Baruch Hashem that was for a good reason. Our daughter Aryana got engaged to Steven Ritholtz. Chantelle had to get up and out of the house, although by Shabbat she probably pushed herself too far and too quickly. Together with help from Ruthie and Shanie and many others, Chantelle orchestrated a small but beautiful meeting of the family. When Rebetzin Abittan's saw the Synagogue she thought someone came in and painted and redid the entire place. Steven spoke beautifully. And we look forward to more joyous occasions to celebrate. Abal all of your children - may they find their Nasib – their "basheret" in the proper time.

Editors Notes

On the way in to the city early this morning with my daughter's Aryana and Mikhayla, we were listening to a class by Rabbi Joey Haber. He began by describing his Sunday last week. A bris for his nephew, a funeral, a late night visit to the hospital for someone's final moments, consoling the family and then arriving home at 3:00AM to find his wife on the phone with her sister who just had a baby. In our community its not rare to have a bris or bar mitzvah and a funeral on the same morning and its common to have an engagement party, a wedding or some other joyous occasion on the same night that we have to make a condolence call. How do we deal with the mixed emotions of joy and sadness? How do we

merge celebration with illness? Is there an emotional Dramamine pill that we can take to help us deal with roller coaster of life?

Rabbi Abittan would tell us to always temper our sadness and temper our joy. He was fond of telling a story about the king who wore a ring with the words, "This too shall pass". The message is fitting in times of joy and times of sadness.

But more important he was a man of Bitachon and would often tell us that the key to life was having bitachon, to trusting in Hashem that every piece, every experience and every occasion is a piece of the puzzle in our lives which we complete for our own benefit. Although we don't understand and can't fully visualize the picture, we have to remember who the artist is. We should remember that we are not alone and pay notice that in times of need, G-d is with us and holding our hands.

I want to tell you an amazing story I heard yesterday, but to do so, I need to give you a bit of background. Our dear friend Karen Rosenthal lost her mother this week, Suzanne Rosenthal - Shoshannah Mirriam bat Belle.

Suzanne Rosenthal together with our friends the Modell family are founders of the original organization that became Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America. In 1955, days before her wedding, she was stricken with terrible pains which were said to be everything from nerves and jitters, to overwork and exhaustion. At that time no one knew what it was. She had to delay her wedding, but fought through her illness and suffered without complaint, turning her own pain into a cause to help others.

The CCFA notes that, "Suzanne was a fearless, determined and courageous woman who turned her diagnosis of Crohn's disease in 1955 into a legacy that has gone on to help hundreds of thousands of people. She dedicated her life to spreading awareness about Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, supporting and educating patients and funding research to find cures. In 1967, along with her husband, Irwin, Bill and Shelby Modell, and Dr. Henry D. Janowitz she founded the National Foundation of Ileitis and Colitis, now known as the Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America.

"As a patient, volunteer and activist, Suzanne was a tireless pioneer for patients living with IBD and other digestive diseases. Her legacy continues through the many advocacy initiatives and patient support groups she established during her many years of service. She dedicated her life to helping other patients, and

she is personally responsible for the creation of the various CCFA chapters nationwide. No words to truly express our gratitude to Suzanne and all she has done for the 1.4 million people suffering from these diseases."

Karen told us the following story.

Her mother was very ill and was going through surgeries and procedures at Mount Sinai.. Thousands of emails were sent and people around the world were saying Tehilim. Karen was with her mom who was now in a coma. She thought that everyone else is praying. Now with a moment where everything seemed to stop, she too should pray.

She went from the ICU on the 8th floor to the 6th floor where Bikur Cholim had a room. But when the elevator doors opened up, she thought she should just go back up and sit with her mother. She had no idea what would happen and she just wanted to be with her. So she pressed 8 and the doors started to close. But for some reason she put out her arm and stopped them. She stepped onto the sixth floor.

She thought, she wanted to just get the prayer book. She walked into the room and saw four women sitting in the room saying Tehilim – Psalms. She asked them if she could take a book and they say, please do, just return it when you can. They asked her mother's Hebrew name and promised to pray for her.

Karen leaves the room and starts walking towards the elevator but then turned back as if a magnet was pulling her towards the women. She began to panic. I have no idea what to say or even what page to turn to. I am lost. How can I help my mom? How can I fix this? What should I say?

She opened the door and with tears flowing she turns to the women and begs, "please tell me what to say that can help my mom."

And one woman in her sixties with a heavy accent responds, "What, G-d is off duty"?

Karen turns back and explains that it doesn't look very good. She has colitis, she had a blockage and combined with everything else it doesn't look very good.

The woman, turns back and asks, "Colitis, Crohns? I have Crohns, Do you know Dr. Present?" (He too was at the funeral) And Karen responded, yes, without telling her mother's life story.

The woman continued, "When I was pregnant with my 6th child in 1969 they had very little hope that I would be able to carry my daughter to term because I was diagnosed with Crohn's. Dr. Present saved my life and my daughter's life. And Dr. Present gave me a pamphlet and on the cover was a woman bent over in pain. And there was a story of a young girl about to be married who became so ill that her wedding needed to be delayed. So the young chatan said that something needed to be done. He said if no one else is doing anything about the situation, then we will. And with friends they started the foundation that helped save my life. That story was so instrumental and meaningful to me. That story gave me the will to fight and the will to live. And today Baruch Hashem I have 16 children."

And Karen couldn't control herself and blurted out to the woman, "that's my mother and that's my father that you read about".

The woman responded, "You can't understand. It was your mother who gave me the will to live. I thought that if she could do it, I could do it."

And the two hurried together to Suzanne's room. And Karen repeated the story to her mother who perhaps could hear at that moment. And the woman turned to Suzanne and said to her in a loud voice, "Mrs' Rosenthal, I want you to know that you saved my life. You saved my life." And it was at that moment that the doctors told Karen that her mother's battle on this earth was ending.

The Rabbis teach us that the Shehina dwells over the head of an ill person and at that moment all could feel G-d in that room. Karen's mother was gone, but the thousands she helped would live on after as a testament including the Satmar Bikur Cholim volunteer, her 16 children and dozens and dozens of grandchildren.

We say to a mourner, "from Heaven may you be comforted". At that moment, Heaven came down to earth. In memory of Shoshannah Mirriam bat Belle, Tehe Nafsha Serurah BeSror HaChayim.

Shabbat Shalom

David Bibi

PS ... Shalom from Israel. A friend asked me to post the following in the newsletter. It's a plea from Arlene and Ami Bar-Yosef, Moshav Sitrya, Israel with regard to their son.

Our son, Guy Bar-Yosef, was diagnosed with an acute form of leukemia this past April 2012. He must receive a bone marrow (=stem cell) transplant from a matching donor soon. We are turning to everyone and anyone who may be able to help.

Because of Guy's genetic lineage, we specifically seek donors with mixed genetic backgrounds. My husband's parents were, respectively, of Moroccan and Lithuanian origin, and mine hailed from Latvia (Baronovich, Russia, and nearby).

In Israel tissue typing and matching is done by "Ezer Mizion", and in the USA "Be The Match" or "Gift of Life". Healthy donors are accepted into international registries between the ages of 18-45. Blood type does not matter. There are not enough people of Sephardic origin in the international bone marrow donor registries. This is a chance to save a life!

The initial test is a simple, painless, saliva swab taken from the cheek. If a match is found, he/she will be asked to come and donate blood on a given day, at a hospital in Tel Aviv. No surgical procedure is involved. Flights and all expenses will be paid.

Another way to assist is by making a monetary donation to "Ezer Mizion". Each test costs them 250 NIS (\$65) to process, and they don't have the necessary budget. The website is: <https://www.ezermizion.org/Donate> (Tax-deductible receipts are issued). The name of the person in whose honor the donation is being made is Guy Bar-Yosef. Tests take a few weeks to process. Therefore, time is of the essence. Please notify friends, colleagues, etc. via Facebook or other methods. We sincerely appreciate every effort made on Guy's behalf.

Guy is a much sought-after tour guide in Israel, working in Jewish education. He has led many Jewish high school and Birthright groups, as his way of interacting with youth is so very special. He is married, and the father of 5 young children who need him. He deserves any help, and we are seeking every possible avenue.

Thanks so very much. Arlene and Ami Bar-Yosef, Moshav Sitrya, Israel
Questions can be addressed to me at: arleneby@yahoo.com

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st Aliya: A list of raw materials necessary for building the Mishkan was presented to the Bnai Yisroel: gold, silver, copper, wool dyed sky-blue, dark

red, and crimson, linen, goats wool, ram skins, acacia wood, oil, spices, incense, and precious stones. The Ark is described in detail.

2nd Aliya: The cover of the Ark and the Cherubim are detailed. The weight of the cover alone, without the Cherubim, is between 150 lb. and 2500 lb. of pure gold! The Shulchan - Table and the Showbread are described.

3rd & 4th Aliyot: The Menorah and her utensils are described. Her weight was 1 Talent = 3000 Shekels = 150 lb. of pure gold. The basic structure of the Mishkan, consisting of beams, decorative materials and leather coverings, is outlined.

5th Aliya: The Paroches- dividing partition separating the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Mishkan is described.

6th & 7th Aliyot: The ramped, copper, Mizbeach is described. The outer enclosure surrounding the entire Mishkan is described.

Haftarah: Melachim I 5:26-6:13

This week's Haftarah describes the construction of the first Bais Hamikdash. Shlomo Hamelech - King Solomon, assembled the necessary materials and laborers to accomplish this monumental task - the building of Hashem's home! 30,000 men were conscripted into the labor force, along with 70,000 transporters and 80,000 stonecutters.

In 2928, four hundred and eighty years after leaving Egypt, the construction began. The connection to this weeks Parsha is obvious. The Bais Hamikdash replaced the Mishkan as the one place upon earth where G-d's presence was overtly manifest. It was during the 1st Temple when actual "miracles" occurred in the normal functioning of the Bais Hamikdash.

The whereabouts of the Mishkan is a matter of great historical controversy. Some claim that it was destroyed. Others claim that it was hidden within the Temple Mount in a great cavern directly beneath the Bais Hamikdash, and that it was placed there fully assembled. At present, a major archeological dig is underway to uncover the hidden Mishkan.

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

"And they shall take for me a portion." (Shemot 25:2)

The Bet Halevi explains that the order of the parashiot, last week Mishpatim and this week

Terumah, has great significance. Our parashah of Terumah speaks about making donations to build the Mishkan. Last week's parashah speaks about the laws of honesty in one's money dealings. The Torah is teaching us that first we must make sure our money is earned honestly and then that money can be given to charity. Our Sages tell us that the Mishkan was never destroyed because all the money used was pure.

One time Rabbi Chaim Volozhin had a group of Rabbis as guests in his house. Suddenly one of the guests mistakenly tugged at the tablecloth and all the glassware fell on the hard floor. Rabbi Chaim said that they should not think that anything broke. They looked and were amazed to see that nothing broke. He explained that the money used to buy them was earned with complete honesty and he has a tradition handed down that utensils bought with pure money will never break.

I recall about a year ago there was an interesting event. A shoplifter entered a store in the Bronx and stole some merchandise. Two employees saw him and screamed at him. The thief ran away with the goods and they gave chase. They caught up with him and held him down until they could call the police. At that point a crowd gathered and started heckling the people that caught the thief, saying, "Why are you calling the police? What do you care, it wasn't your merchandise. You only work there!"

Society's definition of honesty is very different than ours. It's up to us to raise the standard. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

"Make an Ark of cedar wood...and cover it with gold." (Shemot 25:10-11)

The Aron (Ark), which held the two Tablets in them, had to be made out of cedar wood and covered with gold from within and from without. Since this is one of the most important vessels in the Mishkan, shouldn't it be made totally out of gold? What is the significance of the wood between the layers of gold?

The answer is that the Torah must be kept in something wooden because wood is a substance which symbolizes growth. The scholar and the layman both must be like wood in the sense that they are constantly growing and improving. The gold covering symbolizes the midot, the character, which must be sterling and pure like the pure gold in the Mishkan, but the main substance which can hold the Torah is wood. The lesson for us is that no matter what our level of understanding is, we must try to increase our learning and be constantly on the move towards perfection. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

HISTORY LESSON

"Experience is the best teacher," declared Grandpa to his twelve-year-old grandson.

"In some ways you might be right," countered the precocious pre-teen. "It really depends on whether or not you learn from the experience.

There is a very big difference between the learning processes of humans as opposed to those of animals. Both have the ability to learn from experience, but the animal's potential is limited. Animals can only learn from their own experience. They learn to avoid situations that cause them pain, and repeat activities that bring them pleasure or satisfaction.

Human beings, on the other hand, can learn from the experience of others. "History repeats itself" is more than a catchy phrase. People who study events of the past and analyze their causes learn from the experience of others without having to live through each situation. Much can be learned from the mistakes of the foolish and the wicked, and students of human behavior can also grow as a result of analyzing the actions of the righteous.

It is quite true that if individuals merely repeat their behavioral patterns over and over, experience teaches nothing! Repeated mistakes just become more ingrained and sometimes develop into bad habits. Experience is a good teacher only when people analyze their own errors in order to determine and eliminate their causes. But if everyone continues to act in an unevaluated, habitual fashion, nothing is gained from experience.

It pays to take advantage of your human faculties, to learn from the lessons of the past, and to grow. Don't live like an animal. (One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

Visit DailyHalacha.com, DailyGemara.com,
MishnaBerura.com, LearnTorah.com

The Sephardic Custom to Sing "Mi Kamocha" on the Shabbat Before Purim

There is a custom among Sepharadim to sing the Piyut (hymn), "Mi Kamocha Ve'en Kamocha" on the Shabbat before Purim. This song is, essentially, a poetic description of the Purim story. It follows the sequence of the Hebrew alphabet, and each line is taken from a verse in Tanach and concludes with the word "Lo." It is remarkable to consider that it was

written without the help of computers, and the author cited these verses from memory.

Our custom is to sing the first three and last three stanzas before Musaf in the synagogue, and then to sing the entire Piyut at home after the Shabbat meal.

Hacham Ovadia Yosef, in his Hazon Ovadia – Purim, elaborates on the history of this hymn and its author, Rabbi Yehuda Halevi. Rabbi Yehuda Halevi was a renowned Spanish scholar and poet who lived around the year 4500 (approximately 1200 years ago), during the times of Rav Yosef Ibn Migash. Hacham Ovadia writes that it has been said about Rabbi Yehuda Halevi, "Hishamer Lecha Ben Ta'azob Et Ha'levi" – "Beware, not to abandon the Levi" – alluding to the fact that we should read and study his works. He is the author of the famous philosophical work Hakuzari, which tells the story of a Jewish scholar who convinced the king of the Khazars about the truth of the Jewish faith. Hacham Ovadia cites the Radbaz (Rabbi David Ben Zimra, Egypt, 1479-1573) as describing the value of this work, and how it is worthwhile for every Jew to study it and "etch it upon the hearts of his children and students." Furthermore, Hacham Ovadia cites from a number of early sources that the story told in Sefer Hakuzari is true, and the king of the Khazars was indeed moved by the scholar's arguments and ultimately converted to Judaism. Some say that the scholar in the story was the one who actually wrote down the events, and Rabbi Yehuda Halevi simply translated that original account into Arabic. It was later translated into Hebrew by Rabbi Shemuel Ibn Tibbon.

Hacham Ovadia further relates that Rabbi Yehuda Halevi was a man of great wealth, and he had an exceptionally beautiful daughter. When she reached adulthood, Rabbi Yehuda Halevi's wife was very anxious to see her married, to the point where Rabbi Yehuda Halevi swore that he would give his daughter in marriage to the next Jewish man who came to their home. The next day, the famous Sage Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra showed up, dressed in tattered garments, as he was impoverished. The girl was horror-stricken upon seeing Ibn Ezra, and her mother approached Rabbi Yehuda Halevi to plead with him not to allow this man to marry their daughter. Rabbi Yehuda Halevi spoke with Ibn Ezra, who, in his great humility, did not reveal his identity. Rabbi Yehuda then went with Ibn Ezra to the Bet Midrash, and he sat down to compose the Mi Kamocha hymn. The hymn, as mentioned earlier, follows the sequence of the Hebrew alphabet, and when Rabbi Yehuda reached the letter "Resh," he had trouble coming up with an appropriate sentence. At that point, his wife came and urged him to come home to eat, and Ibn

Ezra stayed in the Bet Midrash. He peered at Rabbi Yehuda Halevi's work, and made some corrections, and also composed an intricate stanza for the letter "Resh." When Rabbi Yehuda returned, he looked at the paper and realized that this man was Ibn Ezra. He warmly embraced and kissed Ibn Ezra, and told him that he will marry his daughter. Ibn Ezra indeed married Rabbi Yehuda Halevi's daughter, and became wealthy.

In the end, Rabbi Yehuda composed his own stanza for "Resh," but in deference to Ibn Ezra, he incorporated his stanza, as well.

Hacham Ovadia proceeds to cite Rabbi Shaul Ha'kohen's comment in his work Nochah Ha'shulhan, that the custom in his city, Tunis, was to chant "Mi Kamocha" in the middle of "Az Yashir," just prior to the verse, "Mi Kamocha Be'elim Hashem." It indeed appears that this was Rabbi Yehuda Halevi's intent, as the end of this hymn speaks of the miracle of the Yam Suf, the subject of Az Yashir. Nevertheless, Rabbi Shaul Ha'kohen instituted that it should be recited after the repetition of the Amida, as is customary in most communities, in order not to make an interruption in Pesukeh De'zimra. He notes that the Piyutim recited in the prayer service during the Yamim Nora'im should likewise be recited either before Pesukeh De'zimra or after the repetition of the Amida, and not in the paragraph of Yoser Or, as they are in some communities. The Hida (Rav Haim Yosef David Azulai, 1724-1807), in his work Tub Ha'ayin (18), likewise established that the Piyutim should not be recited until after the repetition of the Amida.

In any event, everyone should certainly make a point of following this time-honored custom and sing this Piyut, and, G-d-willing, we should be worthy of singing a "Shira Hadasha" – a new song at the time of the final redemption. Rashi comments that when the Gemara establishes the Halacha of "Mishenichnas Adar Marbim Be'simha" (we increase our joy when Adar begins), this is because Adar ushers in the period of Purim and Pesah, which are holidays of redemption. This is the season when we anticipate our final redemption, as the Sages famously comment, "In Nissan they were redeemed, and in the Nissan we will be redeemed in the future." We thus hope and pray that just as we sing the praises of Hashem now, we will have the privilege of singing His praise after the final redemption, Amen.

Rabbi Wein

Giving away some of one's material wealth is never an easy thing. Our instinct tells us that what is mine, earned through my efforts, should always remain

mine and in my possession. In the phrase of the rabbis, we have "a jaundiced eye" towards others and we resent their imposing themselves upon us for continued help and financial donations. We do not even think ourselves to be selfish for thinking and behaving in this fashion.

After all there is a rabbinic opinion in Avot that states that what is mine is mine and what is yours is yours and that this viewpoint is a balanced and median one. Yet there is another opinion expressed in that very same mishna in Avot that declares such an attitude regarding one's possessions to be the trait of the wicked people from the locality of Sodom. This is in line with the Torah's early description of human nature as "being evil from its earliest youth."

The Torah recognizes human nature for what it is. Man is born as a wild donkey, selfish, screaming, kicking and grasping. The Torah came to adjust human nature to seek higher goals and greater moral and social stature. We cannot completely alter human nature. But we can refine it and direct it towards noble goals and higher purposes.

The Torah recognizes that what is mine is mine and what is yours is yours and yet it points out that this seemingly logical balanced view eventually leads down the slippery slope of Sodomite behavior. One must therefore train one's self in the art of giving and donating one's wealth to others, be they individuals in need or worthy institutions and causes such as the Mishkan/tabernacle.

I unfortunately recently spent over a month confined to a sickbed until the infection that I had came under control and I was able to start walking again. The problem was that during that month of complete physical inactivity my back and leg muscles atrophied, so that even though I wished to walk upright and normally again I could not do so without great pain and difficulty. Eventually, I slowly returned to my normal health and my muscles again became reacquainted with bearing my not inconsiderable bulk.

This physical rule applies to charitable giving as well. One who does not give charity regularly will find that the generous hand muscles that sign the check and open the wallet have atrophied so that even when one wishes to give, it is painful and sometimes even impossible to do so. Therefore the Torah places great emphasis in this week's parsha upon the ability to give freely and voluntarily to the great cause – the holy Mishkan/Tabernacle.

It almost becomes the primary commandment in the Torah, in terms of the attention devoted to it in the holy text itself. This is because most of the other commandments of the Torah require discipline and control, not to give into our base natures, but here the Torah demands that we completely overcome our natural state of what is mine is mine and what is yours is yours.

Here we are required not to merely channel or control our nature but rather to change it completely. And that requires constant effort, training and habitual behavior.

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky - Parsha Parables

Extincted Defined: This week the Torah begins the commandments that entail both collecting for, and the building of the Mishkan, the sanctuary that stood and travelled with the Children of Israel during their sojourn in the desert. The Torah specifies the materials needed for construction: "And this is the offering which you shall take of them: gold, and silver, and brass; and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen and goats" (Exodus(Rashi explains what was needed was the hair of goats. Therefore, Onkelos translated it as "Umay Azai, what comes from the goats, but not the actual goats themselves [i.e., not the goat skins], Because, [if that was the case] Targum's translation of the word עֵיזִי [goats] is אֵיזָז (see Gen. 30:32). Rashi explains why the Targum chooses a particular translation. The Torah continues: In addition to requests for acacia-wood; oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense; onyx stones, and stones to be set, for the ephod, and for the breastplate, the Torah requests contributions of "oros eezim and oros techashim" which seems to mean the skins of goats and the skins of the tachash (whatever that means) and that is where Rashi gets involved once again in why Targum translates a certain way. Rashi explains that the tachash was a species of animal that existed only for a limited time, and it had many hues (gavanim). And once again he rationalizes the Targum "Therefore, [Onkelos] translates [the word tachash as] sasgoona אֵזֶזֶז, because it rejoices (sas) and boasts of its hues (gavanim - גַּוָּנִים). -[see Shab. 28a, b]."

It's quite intriguing. Rashi usually quotes the Targum who defines words in the Aramaic language according to the Aramaic dictionary or axioms. In these two cases, Rashi seems to rationalize as to why the Targum translates the way he does. In the first scenario, Rashi is bothered. After all, in Hebrew, eezim, literally means goats. But the Targum Unkeles seems to say something else. Thus Rashi

explains that the Torah is actually not referring to a goat, but rather the goat hair, and therefore the Targum translates it as "What comes from goats." However, the second Rashi is truly difficult. Rashi explains that tachash was a species of animal lasted only a short time. In other words it became extinct. Rashi then describes the tachash as an animal which had many colors. What comes next is quite curious. "Therefore, Unkeles translates it with the word Sasggonna, meaning it boasts of its many colors. First, why did Rashi say, "Therefore' Unkeles translates it with the word sasggonna, meaning it boasts of its many colors." Maybe that is the Aramaic name? Second, what connection does the name have to do with the fact that the tachash is now extinct?

The Story: As a kid, I would read the Encyclopedia Brown series by Donald Sobel. It was about a kid Leroy Brown from the fictitious town of Idaville. His father was the police chief and he was a kid sleuth whose genius and perceptive abilities earned him the nickname Encyclopedia.

In one story a shady coin dealer wants to sell the kids a "rare coin." It was so old he claimed that it was dated 100 BC! Encyclopedia exposed him with one simple point. You can't mint a coin and date it "BC"! How can one date anything that they didn't know would happen?

The Message: Rav Yehoshua Leib Diskin explains: If the tachash only existed for a brief time, the period of the Israelites trek through the desert, then how could it have an Aramaic name? How is it possible that Unkelus who lived in the time of the Temple know a name for a species that only existed in the desert and was extinct way before the time he was around? Thus, Rashi explains that the tachash was an animal that had a coat of many hues and colors and "Therefore (even though even though Targum may not have an exact name for it, it is defined by its essence) because it rejoices (sas) and boasts of its hues (gavanim)!"

Sir Jonathan Sacks
Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations
of the Commonwealth

Building Builders

As soon as we read the opening lines of Terumah we begin the massive shift from the intense drama of the exodus with its signs and wonders and epic events, to the long, detailed narrative of how the Israelites constructed the Tabernacle, the portable sanctuary that they carried with them through the desert.

By any standards it is a part of the Torah that cries out for explanation. The first thing that strikes us is the sheer length of the account: one third of the book of Shemot, five parshiyot – Terumah, Tetsaveh, half of Ki Tissa, Vayakhel and Pekudei, interrupted only by the story of the golden calf.

This becomes even more perplexing when we compare it with another act of creation, namely G-d's creation of the universe. That story is told with the utmost brevity: a mere thirty four verses. Why take some fifteen times as long to tell the story of the Sanctuary?

The question becomes harder still when we recall that the mishkan was not a permanent feature of the spiritual life of the children of Israel. It was specifically designed to be carried on their journey through the wilderness. Later, in the days of Solomon, it would be replaced by the Temple in Jerusalem. What enduring message are we supposed to learn from a construction that was not designed to endure?

Even more puzzling is that fact that the story is part of the book of Shemot. Shemot is about the birth of a nation. Hence Egypt, slavery, Pharaoh, the plagues, the exodus, the journey through the sea and the covenant at Mount Sinai. All these things would become part of the people's collective memory. But the Sanctuary, where sacrifices were offered, surely belongs to Vayikra, otherwise known as Torat Kohanim, Leviticus, the book of priestly things. It seems to have no connection with Exodus whatsoever.

The answer, I believe, is profound. The transition from Bereishit to Shemot, Genesis to Exodus, is about the change from family to nation. When the Israelites entered Egypt they were a single extended family. By the time they left they had become a sizeable people, divided into twelve tribes plus an amorphous collection of fellow travellers known as the *erev rav*, the "mixed multitude."

What united them was a fate. They were the people whom the Egyptians distrusted and enslaved. The Israelites had a common enemy. Beyond that they had a memory of the patriarchs and their G-d. They shared a past. What was to prove difficult, almost impossible, was to get them to share responsibility for the future.

Everything we read in Shemot tells us that, as is so often the case among people long deprived of freedom, they were passive and they were easily moved to complain. The two often go together. They expected someone else, Moses or G-d himself, to

provide them with food and water, lead them to safety, and take them to the promised land.

At every setback, they complained. They complained when Moses' first intervention failed:

"May the Lord look on you and judge you! You have made us obnoxious to Pharaoh and his officials and have put a sword in their hand to kill us." (Ex. 5: 21)

At the Red Sea they complained again:

They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!" (Ex. 14: 11-12)

After the division of the Red Sea, the Torah says: "When the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and believed in him and in Moses his servant" (Ex. 14: 31). But after a mere three days they were complaining again. There was no water. Then there was water but it was bitter. Then there was no food.

The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death." (Ex. 16: 3)

Soon Moses himself is saying:

"What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me." (Ex. 17: 4)

By now G-d has performed signs and wonders on the people's behalf, taken them out of Egypt, divided the sea for them, given them water from a rock and manna from heaven, and still they do not cohere as a nation. They are a group of individuals, unwilling or unable to take responsibility, to act collectively rather than complain.

And now G-d does the single greatest act in history. He appears in a revelation at Mount Sinai, the only time in history that G-d has appeared to an entire people, and the people tremble. There never was anything like it before; there never will be again.

How long does this last? A mere forty days. Then the people make a golden calf.

If miracles, the division of the sea and the revelation at Mount Sinai fail to transform the Israelites, what will? There are no greater miracles than these.

That is when G-d does the single most unexpected thing. He says to Moses: speak to the people and tell them to contribute, to give something of their own, be it gold or silver or bronze, be it wool or animal skin, be it oil or incense, or their skill or their time, and get them to build something together – a symbolic home for my presence, a Tabernacle. It doesn't need to be large or grand or permanent. Get them to make something, to become builders. Get them to give.

Moses does. And the people respond. They respond so generously that Moses is told, "The people are bringing more than enough for doing the work the Lord commanded to be done" (Ex. 36: 5), and Moses has to say, Stop.

During the whole time the Tabernacle was being constructed, there were no complaints, no rebellions, no dissension. What all the signs and wonders failed to do, the construction of the Tabernacle succeeded in doing. It transformed the people. It turned them into a cohesive group. It gave them a sense of responsibility and identity.

Seen in this context, the story of the Tabernacle was the essential element in the birth of a nation. No wonder it is told at length; no surprise that it belongs to the book of Exodus; and there is nothing ephemeral about it. The Tabernacle did not last forever, but the lesson it taught did.

It is not what G-d does for us that transforms us, but what we do for G-d. A free society is best symbolized by the Tabernacle. It is the home we build together. It is only by becoming builders that we turn from subjects to citizens. We have to earn our freedom by what we give. It cannot be given to us as an unearned gift. It is what we do, not what is done to us, that makes us free. That is a lesson as true today as it was then.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

"And they shall make for Me a Mikdash, and I shall dwell in their midst." (25:8)

The subject of the building of the Sanctuary occupies more space in the Torah than any other matter. It is described repeatedly in all of its minute details and yet the Mishkan did not continue for more than 39 years in its present form. And so, why does the Torah devote so much space to a passing phase of history which lasted such a short time?

The purpose of the Mishkan is clearly stated "And I shall dwell...And they shall know that I am Hashem their G-d that took them forth from the land of Egypt so that I dwell in their midst."

The Mishkan was the means of imparting the True Knowledge, 'Daat Hashem', Sensory Perception. These are the vehicles we use to gain the objective of life, 'Yirat Hashem' which is Awareness of Hashem's presence, greatness/power and kindness which fill the world. "His greatness (gudlo) and His goodness (tuvo) fills the world."

When the Jews in the desert would see Moshe's tent they would point and say "Moshe Rabenu lives right there." And when they saw Aharon's tent they showed their children " Aharon Hacoheh lives over there." When they passed by the Mishkan they all said "Hashem lives there!"

By gaining this 'Emunah Chusheet', Sensory Perception of Hashem, they achieved the highest level of perfection and became the Greatest Generation of all time, 'Dor Deah'.

We have the opportunity to gain this Awareness in our prayers 3 times each day.

When we say "You" (Hashem) about 100 times in the Amidah, paint the picture in your mind that you are standing in front of The King of Kings, your Father who loves you and can do everything for you.

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