

# Kol Mevasser

## SHABBAT KI TAVO

16 Elul 5769

September 5, 2009

Kahal Joseph Congregation • 10505 Santa Monica Boulevard • Los Angeles, CA 90025

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### Today

*Rabbi Yosef Benarroch, SEC Jerusalem*

If one pays close attention to this week's Perasha entitled "Ki Tavo", then they should notice that the word "Hayom" which means "Today" comes up over and over again. To be exact the word appears fifteen times in this week's portion. In one of those places its usage seems to be quite problematic.

In Devarim chapter 26 we read the following, *"Today the Lord your G-d commands you to keep these statutes and judgments. You shall therefore keep them with all your heart and all your soul. Today you have accepted the Lord to be your G-d and to walk in his ways and to keep his statutes and his commandments, and his judgments and to listen to his voice. (Devarim 26:16-17)*

The word "Today" is quite difficult in this context. Remember this week's Perasha is taking place thirty-nine years after the Exodus from Egypt and the receiving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. How can the verse say that "today" you are accepting G-d and his commandments? Didn't the nation already accept G-d and the Torah thirty-nine years earlier?

Sensing the problem Rashi comments that these words are not to be taken literally. In his commentary he says the following, *"(this means) that every day (the Torah) must be new in your eyes as if on that day you received it" (Rashi Devarim 26:16)*. In other words what Rashi is suggesting is that we can always relive events of the past. While it is true that the Torah was given thirty nine years earlier, nevertheless a Jew has to every day accept the Torah anew. A person has to

### PRAYER SCHEDULE

#### SHABBAT KI TAVO

##### 15 Elul / Friday, September 4th

Shaharith .....6:30 am  
Minhah & Arvith .....6:45 pm  
Shabbat Candlelighting.....6:56 pm

##### 16 Elul / Saturday, September 5th

Shaharit .....8:30 am  
Minhah & Arvith .....6:30 pm  
Motzei Shabbat .....7:58 pm

#### Weekdays

##### 17-18 Elul / September 6 & 7

Selihoth.....6:30 am  
Shaharith .....7:30 am

##### Sunday, September 6th

**Talmud Torah ..... 9:30 am**  
*First Day of Classes—Welcome Back!*

##### 19 to 21 Elul/ September 8 to 10

Selihoth.....5:45 am  
Shaharith .....6:30 am

### SHABBAT NITZAVIM-VAYELEH

#### 22 Elul / Friday, September 11th

Shaharith .....6:30 am  
Minhah & Arvith .....6:30 pm  
Shabbat Candlelighting.....6:47 pm

always see every day as a new day that presents new challenges.

Far too many people are paralyzed by their failings in the past, and far too many people live in a dream of the future. What Rashi is pointing out is that nothing is more important than the present. Each one of us must realize that what was was, and that what can be, can only happen if we take advantage of the present.

I would suggest that this concept is also at the root of "Teshuba", repentance. It is no coincidence that this week's Perasha of "Ki Tavo" is always read in the weeks that precede the High Holidays. If there was ever a more appropriate

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time for the importance of "Hayom" it is during this time period where repentance is of such importance.

In his code when dealing with the laws of repentance Maimonides has the following to say, "A person should always consider every day as their last and if they would perish from the world they would do so not having been forgiven for their sins. Therefore a person should immediately repent and not wait for a later day to do so." (Maimonides Laws of Repentance 6:2).

Like Rashi Maimonides emphasizes the importance of seizing the present. Teshuba is based on the premise that what was was, and that every day offers new opportunities to not only fix the past but to create a new beginning. We can only do that if we realize the importance of "Today".

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 98a) records a conversation that took place between the great sage Rabbi Yehoshua the son of Levi and Elijah the prophet. The meeting takes place at a cave upon which Rabbi Yehoshua asks Elijah when the "Mashiach" will arrive. Rabbi Yehoshua is sent by Elijah to meet the "Mashiach" in the market place in a Roman city. During that meeting Rabbi Yehoshua asks the "Mashiach", "When are you coming"? The "Mashiach" answers "Today". Many days later Rabbi Yehoshua once again finds himself in the presence of Elijah who asks him what the "Mashiach" said. Rabbi Yehoshua answers, "The Mashiach is nothing but a liar because he said he was coming today and he didn't come". Elijah explains that the meaning of "today" is based on a verse in the Psalms 95 that says, "Today if you will listen to my voice". What the "Mashiach" meant, explains Elijah, is that on the day that the Jewish people follow the words of Hashem then on that day he will come.

This story emphasizes the power of every day. We have the power every day to bring the "Mashiach". We can only do that by seizing the opportunities that every day has to offer. We must realize that every day is a new day and no matter what we did the previous day, the present day offers us new opportunities to fix the past and to create a new beginning.

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### ***The Great Sephardic Scholars: Shmuel Hanagid***

He ordered the offender brought before him, and urged the Vizier to have his tongue cut out in accordance with the law of that time. Instead of punishing him in the way the Caliph urged him to do, Rabbi Shmuel gave the offender a present and said to the Caliph, "Not merely have I cut out his bad tongue, but I have given him a good one instead."

When Caliph Habus died and his son Badis succeeded him, Rabbi Shmuel retained his Viziership. In fact the Caliph entrusted his able Vizier with managing all the affairs of state, as he himself wanted to enjoy himself fully, without carrying the burden of any state matters whatever.

Rabbi Shmuel's fame grew daily, but at the same time he remained as modest and as affectionate as always. He was particularly kind to scholars, and many Jewish Talmudists, philosophers and poets were his constant guests, receiving their full support from his own means, so that they could engage in their studies and creative work undisturbed. Among them was the famous Jewish poet Rabbi Solomon ibn Gebirol.

He also maintained many scribes to copy important Hebrew books, and generally did everything possible to further the cause of the Torah and Jewish culture. Rabbi Shmuel is also the author of a work entitled "Mevo Hatalmud" (an introduction to the Talmud) that was later published with every edition of the Talmud, and was even translated into Latin.

Shmuel Hanagid died in Granada in the year 4815 (1055), sadly mourned by the Jewish and Arab population alike. He was succeeded by his son Rabbi Joseph Hanagid.

Shabbat Kiddush  
is sponsored by  
in honor of  
the reading of the Haftarah  
by Sam Lurie  
by Judy & Fred Lurie

Seudah Shlisheet  
is sponsored by  
The Mangoli Family  
in memory of their mother  
Sara bat Rachel, z"l

## Talmud Torah Starts on Sunday!

**First Day of Class**  
**Sunday, September 6th at 9:30 am**

*For information contact Molly at  
310.474.0559 or molly@kahaljoseph.org*

## SPICE READERS CLUB

Wouldn't you like to chant a haftara for a special occasion? Do you want to add spice to your reading? Then call the office to reserve your haftara at 310. 474.0559!. Schedule time with Saeed & learn your haftara with authentic Baghdadi ta'amim, Iraqi

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We would all do well to internalize this message especially as we get closer to the High Holidays. The month of Elul is the month of opportunities. It is during this time that every day we must say "Today I am going to change for the better". It is a time that allows us to let go of the past by embracing the present. To do that we must tap into the power of "Today". Wishing you all a Shabbat Shalom  
*Published courtesy of the SEC*

### In Memoriam

These anniversaries occur from Shabbat, the 9th of Elul (August 29, 2009) to Shabbat, the 16th of Elul (September 5, 2009). It is customary to light a memorial candle in the evening and donate tzedakah. Family members are encouraged to attend services.

**Shabbat / 16 Elul**

Farha bat Yochevet

**Sunday / 17 Elul**

Gala bat Sheikoory Nathan

**Monday / 18 Elul**

Rahel bat Rahma Khatoon\*

**Tuesday / 19 Elul**

Malek bat Yehuda\*

**Wednesday / 20 Elul**

Yaacov Shmoel Azar

**Friday / 22 Elul**

Violet Ezra

Muzli bat Nuna

*\*Yahrzeit names with asterisks are missing contact information for family members. To update the Kahal Joseph database, please call 310.474.0559.*

### Parasha & Haftara

*Parashat Ki Tavo pp.859 Haftarah pp. 874*

### Refuah Shlemah

Yonatan ben Alizah ▪ Mazal Tov bat Sulha Mitana ▪  
Jack Wickett ▪ Ayala bat Naomi ▪ Yosi ben Esther  
Yaheskel ben Regina Matilda Louisa ▪ Victor ben Pauline  
▪ Haim ben Mordechai ▪ Khayah Noa bat Sara ▪ Prina bat  
Esther ▪ Moshe ben Naji ▪ Ramah Regina bat Farha

## **The Great Sephardic Scholars: Shmuel Hanagid (4742-4815)**

Shmuel, the son of Joseph ibn Nagdela, or better known as Rabbi Shmuel Hanagid (the ruling prince) was born in Cordova, Spain, in the year 4742 (18 years before the close of the 10th century of the c.e.) He was a pupil of the great Rabbi Enoch, who had been brought to Cordova in a miraculous way among the "Four Captives." Shmuel also studied languages, mastering Arabic and Latin in addition to Hebrew.

In the year 4773 (1013), when civil war in Cordova caused widespread persecution of the Jews, Shmuel was forced to leave Cordova together with numerous other Jews, and settled in Malaga. Thus the great economic and cultural Jewish center of Cordova was all but destroyed at that time, but simultaneously another great Jewish center was coming up that of Granada, the new capital of the Arabic Kingdom. Shmuel made his way thither, and settled down in business in that city.

At the same time he never gave up his studies, and was hard at work in the study of the Talmud and sciences whenever he found time for it. Soon he became known as a great poet and writer, not merely in Hebrew but also in Arabic. His perfect mastery of the Arabic language, grammar and literature became known to the Vizier Abu-al-Kassim-ibn-al-Adiph. The Vizier invited him to his house to make his acquaintance. He was so impressed by his scholarship and wisdom that he appointed him as his personal secretary and adviser. The more the Vizier knew his Jewish friend the more he became convinced of his great statesmanship and great political astuteness, as well as of his honesty and reliability. The Vizier did nothing without first consulting Shmuel.

One day the Vizier became very ill, and Caliph Habus came to visit his dying Vizier. The Caliph told the Vizier how sorry he was to see his able and devoted minister go, whereupon the Vizier confessed to him that he owed all his success to his able Jewish secretary and adviser. And so when the Vizier died, the Caliph appointed Shmuel in his place.

The office of Vizier was that of Minister of State, the highest office next to the Caliph himself. At the same time Rabbi Shmuel retained his position as the rabbi of his great and flourishing community, and also as the director of the Talmudic academy of Granada. He never stopped caring for his brethren, as well as for his land, and served both with equal devotion. As communal rabbi and director of the academy, Rabbi Shmuel Hanagid (as he was now called by all his devoted brethren) encouraged the study of the Torah, and Granada became a great Talmudic center.

As to his attitude towards his enemies who envied him the honor and esteem he enjoyed, it can best be seen from the following story: One day, when Shmuel Hanagid accompanied the Caliph through the streets of Granada, a wicked Arab perfume vendor called some insulting words in the direction of the Jewish Vizier. The Caliph became furious.

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