

KOIL MEVASSER

KAHAL JOSEPH CONGREGATION • 10505 SANTA MONICA BOULEVARD, LOS ANGELES, CA 90025 • 310.474.0559 • WWW.KAHALJOSEPH.COM

SHABBAT SHEMINI

Restraint

Rabbi Benarroch
SEC Jerusalem

There is a beautiful story told about "Hannah" the wife of the Vilna Gaon one of the great Rabbinic figures in Europe. Every week Hannah along with a friend of hers collected money for poor brides. The two women made an agreement between themselves, that whoever left the world first, would return to the other in a dream and describe what heaven was like. After many years Hannah's friend passed away and appeared to her in a dream. Hannah, with great excitement, asked her what heaven was like. She responded with the following, "first of all what you see down there is not what appears up here. I will give you but one small example. Many years ago when we were collecting money for the poor brides a wealthy man drove by in a carriage. Remember you waved at him trying to get his attention. But he didn't see you and he went off in the distance. I remember that for an entire

week you were upset for not being able to get that man's attention. But you should know one thing; in heaven that futile wave of your hand shook its very foundations. You cannot even imagine what a great reward you have waiting for you for that simple wave of your hand".

We often underestimate the power of our actions. Jewish tradition teaches that not only does our every action count; but that it is incumbent upon us to constantly strive to better our actions (*Tikkun Midoṭ*). While character improvement is required throughout the year, it is especially important

(Continued on page 2)

A mosaic created in an artist's studio in Old Jaffa recounting highlights of this week's Torah portion, also known as a Parasha, entitled Shemini.



Prayer Schedule

SHABBAT

PARASHAT SHEMINI

Friday, April 9th

Minhah & Arbit 7:00 pm

Candle Lighting 7:01 pm

Saturday, April 10th

Shaharit 8:30 am

Minhah & Arbit 6:45 pm

Motzei Shabbat 8:06 pm

WEEKDAYS

Sunday, April 11th

Shaharit 7:30 am

Bar/Bat Mitzva Classes 8:30 am

Talmud Torah Classes 9:30 am

Mon.-Thurs., April 12 to 15

Shaharit 6:30 am

Yom HaShoah

Tuesday, April 12th

Rosh Hodesh Iyar

Wed & Thurs. April 14-15

PARASHAT TAZRIA-MEZORAH

Friday, April 16th

Minhah & Arbit 7:00 pm

(Continued from page 1)

during the days between the festivals of *Pesah* and *Shavuot*. During this time period we are commanded to count the forty nine days of the "*Omer*" leading to the festival of "*Shavuot*" that marks the receiving of the Torah.

Our commentaries point out that in addition to counting the days of the "*Omer*", we should also engage in improving our character. If the end of the counting process is marked by the festival of *Shavuot* that symbolizes the receiving of the Torah, then just like the Jewish nation had to prepare for the receiving of the Torah, so must we. That preparation comes in the form of self improvement. It is this process that I wish to address today.

There is an aspect of the counting of the "*Omer*" that we pay very little attention to. If one looks closely at the text found in most prayer books, then you should notice alongside every day's counting two words that describe the attribute of that specific day. The attributes are taken

from the lower seven "*Sefirot*" from the "Ten Sefirot" enumerated in the Kabbalah. What that means is that during every week there is an attribute that creates a focal point for us to be working on. Each day allows us to focus on a different aspect of that week's attribute.

The second week (which we are presently in) is associated with the attribute of "*Gevurah*" which means strength. A strong person is referred to as a "*Gibor*". But what does a strong person mean in Judaism? Is it a question of muscles? Is the strong person one who gets things done through intimidation? Is the strong person the one who yells the loudest? The answer to this question can be found in "*Ethics of Our Fathers*" (*Pirkei Avot*).

The Mishnah of *Pirkei Avot* explains "*who is a Gibor (strong person) one who conquers their inclinations*" (*Avot 4:1*). Seen in this way "*Gevurah*" has to do with restraint. As humans we are created with a variety of impulses. The "*Gibor*" is not the person who uses those impulses indulgently, but the one

who can display self control and restrain those impulses.

In the opening of the Amidah we refer to G-d as a "*Gibor*". In the opening paragraph of the Amidah we say the following, "*Blessed are you G-d, our G-d and the G-d of our forefathers the G-d of Abraham the G-d of Isaac and the G-d of Jacob; the great and mighty (Gibor) and awesome G-d the supreme G-d, who bestows kindness and creates everything*" (*From the Amidah*). Why when referring to G-d as *mighty (Gibor)* would we associate the words "who bestows kindness"? The reference to G-d as "mighty" in context with the one who "creates everything" makes sense. We can well understand how a G-d who created everything is mighty. But why would kindness be associated with being mighty? The answer has to do with restraint. From G-d's perspective, compassion has to do with being able to restrain absolute judgment. Compassion implies that for the time being judgment is being suspended.

What this means for all

of us is that during this week where the attribute of the "*Omer*" is "*Gevurah*", we must be working on our quality of restraint. It is not easy to do, but if we are to earn the title of *strength (Gevurah)* in Jewish terms, then we must be improving this quality.

Restraint is a uniquely human quality. Animals do not have the ability to restrain their instincts. If you place food in front of an animal they will devour it to the last bite. They don't have the quality of restraint to set aside part of their meal for those in need. That is a uniquely human quality.

Another important area where humans can display restraint is in displaying anger. Who amongst us can say that they have been spared from the pangs of anger? To become angry is natural. The question is what happens to us when we become angry? Will we be able to show restraint and control our anger, or like an animal will we bark as loud as we can until we get what we want? Restraint when it comes to anger allows us to define how human or animal we really are.

(Continued on page 4)

In Memoriam

It is customary to light a memorial candle in the evening and to donate tzedakah. Family members are encouraged to attend prayer services in honor of their loved ones.

Sunday / 27 Nisan
Aharon Isaac Levy

Wednesday / 30 Nisan
Yehezkel ben Avraham
Hayim Yaacov

Thursday / 1 Iyar
Mordechai Haim ben Moshe
Hai
Eliahou ben Meir*

Friday / 2 Iyar
Mounie bat Miriam

Shabbat / 3 Iyar
Hanina bat Chahla
Sasson ben Binyamin Gemal

Yahrzeit names with asterisks are missing information for family members. To update, please call the office at 310.474.0559.

Parasha & Haftara

Shabbat Shemini

Parasha
pages 443-454

Haftara
pages 454-458

Shabbat
Shalom

Community News

What is The Omer?

"When you take this people out of Egypt," said G-d to Moses when He revealed Himself to him in a burning bush near Mount Sinai, "you shall serve G-d on this mountain."

It took seven weeks to reach the mountain. The people of Israel departed Egypt on the 15th of Nisan (the first day of Passover); on the 6th of Sivan, celebrated ever since as the festival of Shavuot, they assembled at the foot of Mount Sinai and received the Torah from G-d. Partly to remember this time period, The Omer is counted after nightfall each evening beginning on the second night of Passover and ending on Shavuot.

The Kabbalists explain that the 49 days that connect Passover with Shavuot correspond to the forty-nine drives and traits of the human heart. Each day saw the refinement of one of these *sefirot*, bringing the people of Israel one step closer to their election as G-d's chosen people and their receiving of His communication to humanity.

Each year, we retrace this inner journey with our "Counting of the Omer." Beginning on the second night of Passover, we count the days and weeks: "Today is one day to the Omer"; "Today is two days to the Omer"; "Today is eleven days, which are one week and four days of the Omer"; and so on, till "Today is forty-nine days, which are seven weeks to the Omer." Shavuot, the "Festival of Weeks" is the product of this count, driven by the miracles and revelations of the Exodus but achieved by a methodical, 49-step process of self-refinement within the human soul.



Learn to Be a Haftarah Reader

Wouldn't you like to chant from the concluding section of the Torah read on every Shabbat—the Haftarah? Reserve a haftarah portion at 310.474.0559. Then, schedule time with Saeed & learn your haftarah with authentic Baghdadi ta'amim, our Iraqi melodies for Torah reading.

To Publish a Notice

If you have information regarding life events such as births, bar/bat mitzvahs, graduations, weddings, anniversaries or passings, please call the synagogue office at 310.474.0559 to ensure that the information reaches our editor. Please note that notices must be received by noon on Wednesday for inclusion in that week's issue.

Refuah Shlemah

Please include these individuals in your prayers for healing:

Yonatan ben Alizah • Mazal Tov bat Sulha Mitana • Matilda Louisa • Yaheskel ben Regina • Ayala bat Naomi • Khayah Noa bat Sara • Haim ben Mordechai • Pnina bat Esther • Yosi ben Esther • Victor ben Latif • Ramah Regina bat Farha • Aziza bat Sara • Merna bat Marsel • Judith bat Malka • Ofek ben Yochai • Efrayim Zev ben Fayga • Sulha Matana bat Mozelle

(Continued from page 2)

Restraint is important; without it we are in constant strife with the people and the world around us. We become unyielding and rigid in our personalities. The Talmud (Megilah 28a) explains that *Rabbi Nehunia* merited living a long life because every night before he went to sleep he would forgive anyone who wronged him that day.

Without restraint the law of the jungle rules. Animals cannot forgive; they cannot give the benefit of the doubt. These are unique qualities that human beings possess.

How then can we put this week's attribute of "*Gevurah*" to practical use? The answer is simple. Every day we are confronted with dozens if not hundreds of situations that we can practice restraint. Every time someone angers us it is an opportunity to practice restraint. When we drive and the car in front of us cuts us off it is a chance to practice restraint. When someone is really deserving of our rebuke, then restraint allows us to do it in the most positive way possible. When we lose our cool with our children or our spouse, restraint allows us to solve the matter in a healthy way. By not giving in to our impulses and showing restraint we tap into a uniquely human quality and become truly deserving of the title "*Gibor*" (a strong person).

MITZVOT on SHABBAT

We now offer for donation the following Mitzvot on Shabbat:

1. *Petichat Hechal* The opening of the ark where the Torahs are kept;
2. *Carrying of the Sefer Torah and Sefer Haftara*;
3. *Hakamat Sefer* The lifting and showing of the Torah;
4. *Mashlim** The seventh aliya to the Torah who recites Kaddish;
5. *Maftir** The last aliya to the Torah which includes the reading of the Haftara (which will be read by one of the clergy unless member reading has been previously approved)

Since we count on your donations to the synagogue to keep our membership fees as low as they are, we suggest a minimum donation for all those who are called to the Torah of \$126 or multiples of \$18 or \$26. We appreciate your support. *Paid members may call the office to book the Mashlim or Maftir in advance, in memory of a departed relative. You will receive confirmation before Shabbat if you will receive the aliya or if there is a conflict. The member may also reserve any other aliya in advance by calling the office. Non-members who are interested in aliyot should contact Sarah in the office to determine availability. Please call 310.474.0559 between the hours of 11:00 am and 4:00 pm, Monday through Thursday.

From Spain to Jerusalem

Stories & Song
Sunday Evening
May 2, 2010
Lag Ba'Omer
7:30 pm



at
Kahal Joseph Congregation
10505 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles 90025

World-music artist, composer, producer, educator and peace activist, Yuval Ron will join with Rabbi Hagay Batzri in a concert featuring music from the Levant, North Africa, and the Middle East including songs both past and present. A musician who has been invited to perform for the Dalai Lama, for Pir Zia Iniyat Khan (Head of the Sufi International Order), at the World Festival of Sacred Music and many other venues, Yuval Ron has produced numerous albums highlighting connections amongst diverse musical traditions. In 2006, Yuval won an Oscar for the musical film, *West Bank Story*, and in 2004 received the Los Angeles Treasures Award. He has been awarded grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, American Composers Forum, California Council for the Humanities & the Rockefeller Foundation.



The Yuval Ron Ensemble
featuring kamanche, violin, oud, &
a percussion melange will be joined by
Rabbi Hagay Batzri

VIP Seating \$45
General Seating \$26
To reserve call 310.474.0559