



Softening our Hearts

Parshat Vaera sees the drama of the Exodus from Egypt unfolding. Early on in our parsha, there is a verse that I and many others find very troubling. God addresses Moses saying: *"You shall repeat all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall speak to Pharaoh to let the Israelites depart from his land. But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that I may multiply My signs and marvels in the land of Egypt."* (Exodus 7:2-3). The problem that so many readers and commentators have with this verse is the notion that God would intentionally harden Pharaoh's heart, prolonging the suffering of both the Israelites and the Egyptians in order to demonstrate God's power. How fair is it of God to harden Pharaoh's heart? Our tradition has always emphasised the importance of free choice and the possibility of repentance, of correcting one's behaviour. From this verse it seems like Pharaoh had no choice but to play his role as oppressor without the possibility of seeing the error of his ways. One almost feels sorry for him.

Additionally, we see a continuation of God hardening Pharaoh's heart after each plague. God states after the plague of the locusts: *"For I have hardened his heart"* (Exodus 10:1), and before the death of the firstborn: *"The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart and he did not let the children of Israel go out of his land."* (Exodus 11:1).

Maimonides discusses this problem in the Mishneh Torah:

"If the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, then what was his crime? There are many passages in the Scriptures which seem to contradict the principle of freewill. They imagine that the Holy One pre-ordains humans to do good or evil.

.... When a person sins of his own freewill, that person is punishedsometimes in this world, sometime in the hereafter, and sometimes in both. When does this apply? When that person has not made amends, repentance is the antidote to retribution. But, it may sometimes happen that a person's offence is so grave that s/he is penalised by not being granted to turn from his/her wickedness, so that the person dies with the sins that were committed." (Mishneh Torah 5:2-3).

So it would seem that Maimonides believes there are some transgressions that cannot be forgiven. The punishment for such transgressions is the loss of free will and the ability to repent. Another way to understand Maimonides' explanation is that we can become so deeply entrenched in negative behaviour that it can be

continued...

MAZAL TOV

Sally Davis on her 90th birthday

George & Mila Svetlov on their 50th Wedding Anniversary.

CANDLE LIGHTING

Friday 7:51pm

HAVDALLAH

Saturday 8:27pm

TORAH:

Exodus 6:2 - 9:35

Haftarah:

Ezekiel 28:25 - 29:21

SHABBAT SERVICES

Erev Shabbat

6:15pm - Masorti
(Millie Phillips Building)

Shabbat Morning

10:00am -
Masorti
(Millie Phillips Building)

Progressive
(Heritage Sanctuary)

Jewish Meditation

A free online 3 part series
Fridays 9:00am January
15, 22, 29 (also will be
recorded).

To receive the recordings
please email
orna@emanuel.org.au
Zoom link:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84243683294>

nearly impossible to change our ways.

The story has something profound to say about the human condition. Every moment we have the opportunity to improve the way we treat others. We can easily fall into the place of Maimonides' Pharaoh if we don't observe our way of being in the world. Pharaoh did not have the opportunity to talk about his issues with his friends or consult a mental health professional. It's hard to do that when you are raised by your family and society to believe that you are a god. However we have many methods at our disposal for learning how to soften our hearts. When we recognise we have erred and correct our behaviour, we can be in true and authentic relationship with one another. In so doing, we liberate ourselves and others from mitzrayim, that narrow, cruel and lifeless place. Then we can confidently say *ata b'nei horin*, now we are truly free.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Cantor George Mordecai

Jewnatal

Starting Sunday January 17, 2021

Calling all expecting couples, regardless of whether this is your first, second or more! Join Rabbi Rafi Kaiserbluth for a series of informal sessions, designed as preparation for birth in a Jewish context.

This is also a wonderful opportunity to meet those who are about to welcome a new bundle of joy in their lives.

Register now: <https://tinyurl.com/jewnatal>

voice. treaty. truth advocacy course

WITH LOUISE TOGO
Indigenous community leader

2 x 3 hours over 2 nights

- February 3 from 6pm to 9pm
- February 7 from 5pm to 8pm

Register now: \$50/person
Numbers strictly limited

Note: These sessions are especially for women

Presented by Emanuel Synagogue, Plus61J & NCJW



WHAT'S ON

Morning minyan

Morning Minyanim will resume on Monday 1 February, 2021

Conversations about Israel - Mondays 10:00am-11:30am

Classes will resume on Monday 1 February 2021.

Speakeasy with Rabbi Jeffrey Kamins - Tuesdays at 5:00pm

Will resume Tuesday 2 February 2021.

Parashat HaShavua - Weekly Parasha Study - Wednesdays at 8:15pm

This class will resume on Wednesday January 20, 2021.

Thursday Night in the Circle - Thursdays at 7:15pm

Join Rabbi Cantor George Mordecai on Zoom each Thursday evening for a discussion of Theology, Ethics and to learn some very deep Torah. The next class will take place on the 14th January 2021 before resuming each week from February. <https://zoom.us/j/205614635>

Pre-Shabbat Shmooze - Fridays 10:00am to 11:00am

The Shmooze will resume on Zoom on February 5.

Kef Kids - Looking for a pluralist, social Jewish environment with an experienced education team? Emanuel Synagogue's Kef Kids program runs weekly and enrolments are now open for the new year. Kef Kids welcomes all Jewish students in school years K-5 for Jewish and Hebrew learning, music, games and more. For details email: donny@emanuel.org.au

Learn (or improve your) Hebrew! New term starts February 1

We will open the world of Hebrew reading a prayerbook for you! We are offering weekly Hebrew classes on Monday evenings in term from 5:00pm to 6:00pm for intermediate and 6:00pm to 7:00pm for beginners. Your commitment is just one hour a week and 10-15 minutes practice a day. Register now: emanuel.org.au/learn-hebrew/



Tu Bishvat
Gardening Bee

FOLLOWED BY WINE & CHEESE

Thursday January 28 from 4:00pm to 6:00pm

Tu Bishvat, the New Year of the Trees is here and you are invited to join us for a special celebration - a Gardening Bee followed by wine and cheese. Numbers are limited.

For the details and to register: <https://tinyurl.com/tubish21>

IN MEMORY

There are mourners in our community to whom we extend our sincerest sympathies on the death of their loved ones.

Shiva: Gail Herson nee Simon, Rueben Aaron, Steven Stux, Keith Loon,
Mina Herscovici

Shloshim: Rephaël ben Haï Makhoulf Marouani, Dr Vera Kertesz, Yetta Hendler,
Erwin Brugmans, Susan (Sue) Cohen, Susie Fisher, Waldo Granwal.

This week we observe the Yahrzeits of (observed by):

* Memorial Light

* **David Abbott** (Coral Lawrence)
Robyn Ashes (Agnes Spencer)
Sophie Barold (Gerard Barold)
Malka Bat Eli Melach (Marc Lane)
* **Gina Benjamin** (Susan Benjamin)
Michael Berger (Jane Berger)
Anne Blitz (Rami Moryosef)
Julian Block (David Block, Jessica Block,
Rosie Block, Antonia Milner)
Evrille Bortz (Lynne Perl)
David Carpenter (Dinah Danon)
Barrie Cashman Laws
(Mary-Louise McLaws)
Hannah Cohen Levi (Amnon Levy)
Melvin S. Cooper (John Cooper)
* **Belinda Cork** (Bruce Goldman)
Esther Davis (Richard Davis)
Percy Denenberg (Stephen Denenberg)
Bernard Ferster (Renee Ferster Levy)
Marcia Frankel (Michal Frankel)
Katherine Gal (John Gal)
Mazal Fortune Golan (Charles Golan)
Jeffrey Goldberg (Benzion Goldberg)
Phillip Goran (Deanne Rosenthal)
Roy Thomas Cohen Halpin
(Ross Halpin)
Kathleen Hearst
Desider Hosek (Valerie Hosek)
Richard Immergluck (Yvonne Perczuk)
Jessie Kerlander (Steven Kerlander)
Melitta Kornmehl (Jim Kornmehl)
Rachil Kremer (Edward Kremer)
Fay Lawrence (Yittah Lawrence)

Sandra Lazarus (Mark Lazarus)
Leon Lehrer (Carolyn Crawford,
Gus Lehrer)
Hannah Levy (Beverley Adcock)
Fanny Linker (Maurice Linker)
* **Adolf Lustig**
Eve Mankiewicz (Renee Koonin)
* **Sarah Nassau** (Dianne Nassau)
Benny Norman (Donna Moses)
Lola Penn (Ian Penn)
Noni Pozniak (Brett Pozniak,
Sheldon Pozniak)
Alexander Rabin (Milly Goldman)
Kato Reich (Victoria Reich)
Max Reich (Richard Grant)
Alexander Roby (Patricia Roby)
Leon Roman (Jacheta Schwarzbaum)
* **Babette Rosenmann**
Jadwiga Saper (Tessa Boucher)
Stanislaus Henryk Sharota
(Dorian Sharota)
Klaus Silvers (Marianne Silvers)
John Sirmay (Joy Sirmay, Geoffrey Sirmay,
Michael Sirmay)
Carmel Stafford (Albert Stafford)
Herrmann Teitler (Philip Moses)
Froim Vakhgelt (Ludmila Shneidman)
Lutz Hans Wertheim (Viola Wertheim)
Felix Wirth (Henry Wirth)
Elizabeth Ziegler (John Ziegler)
* **Ernst Zweig** (Evelyn Krieger, Anita Zweig)

Shoah Remembrance: Yosef Korn was born in 1906 in Praha, Czechoslovakia and lived in Moravia-Silesia, Czechoslovakia until he was murdered during the Holocaust.