

The Royal Carriages

Who sent the famous “carts” which were assigned to fetch Jacob, his sons, their family and possessions and bring them to Goshen in Egypt? The story has a contradiction: Although, famously, 45:26 says that Jacob revived after “he saw the carts which Joseph sent to carry him,” earlier in 45:19 it is Pharaoh who suggested sending carts. According to 45:21, “Joseph gave them carts by the order of Pharaoh.” So it does actually seem that it was Pharaoh, not Joseph, who was responsible for sending the carts. Of course, Joseph was the prime minister of Pharaoh who carried out all orders of Pharaoh and was responsible for dispensing all that Pharaoh or the state possessed. So Joseph was the one who actually dispensed the carts. But what is meant by giving the credit to Pharaoh in one verse and to Joseph in another?

This question is connected to another, more famous question, raised in the traditional commentary: What was it about “seeing the carts” which “revived the spirit of their father Jacob,” when previously “Jacob’s heart had fainted in disbelief of them?” One traditional answer taught to schoolchildren homiletically connects the Hebrew term for “cart” with a homonym meaning “heifer,” which is taken as meaning that Joseph established his identity to his father by reminding his father of the last Torah they had studied together, the ritual purification for unsolved homicides by breaking the neck of a heifer! That homiletical answer is quite a stretch, though, and there must be a “literal” answer as to the implication of these “carts.”

The simple literal answer to this question seems to have much to do with these “carts” being Pharaoh’s. Jacob sees that his family and possessions are being summoned to Egypt in royal coaches, carriages, and such conveyances, and then he knows this tale his sons have told him of his lost son’s rise to chief vizier in Egypt is undeniable. We might compare it to being summoned to the White House in a stretch limousine, or the arrival of Cinderella’s pumpkin-coach! In general, the Bible connects carts, like chariots, to kings and royalty. Common people rode and loaded their goods on the backs of donkeys and camels. Indeed, when the brothers had returned to Jacob without Benjamin they returned on their donkeys, and it was in a donkey-sack that they found Joseph’s goblet. We know that only kings and nobility had horses and horse-drawn chariots, but it also seems likely that carts and other wheeled conveyances, even those pulled by more humble animals, were in use largely by the nobler classes. The chariots of kings and nobles were distinctive, and likely even the wheeled carts and humbler conveyances for everyday use would have been distinctive as well, more like what we would denote a “coach” or “carriage.” Carts, particularly splendid carriages such as these were likely to have been, proclaimed Pharaonic provenance. Pharaoh might have been the one who first suggested the carts, but such noble carriages being placed at their disposal was evidence of Joseph’s family being treated like nobility and hence proof of Joseph’s rise to noble station. Jacob thus emphasizes Joseph being responsible for the sending of the carts, i.e., through Joseph’s high station. Further, by Joseph’s taking up Pharaoh’s suggestion to convey them in the royal carriages, Joseph himself gets credit for treating his father, brothers, and family with utmost honor, dignity and respect. Jacob is revived by this great honor which Joseph has seen to it they are accorded. Jacob’s heart is warmed (especially given the background of the brothers’ past jealousy and poor treatment of Joseph) by this grand gesture of “honoring thy father.”



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL
The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Shabbat Vayiggash

December 10-11, 2021

SCHEDULE

Candle Lighting | 4:10 pm

Friday Evening Services | 4:15 pm

Friday Night Lights | following services | *2021-22 season sponsored by the Julis-Rabinowitz family*

Zemirot | 8:30 am

Shahrit | 9:00 am

Jr. Congregation | 10:30 am | Levy | Led by teen leaders and Mrs. Lisa Rohde

Outdoor Kiddush | following services | *See inside for this week’s kiddush sponsors*

Shabbat Afternoon Class | 3:30 pm | Outdoors | Rabbi Meir Soloveichik
open to fully vaccinated individuals only

Shabbat Afternoon Services | 4:05 pm

Shabbat Ends | 4:55 pm

Virtual Habdala Service | Rev. Z. Edinger | 5:15 pm

Parent-Child Learning & Pizza | Rev. Z. Edinger | 5:45 pm

Weekday Service Times

Morning Services

Sunday: 8:05 am | Monday-Thursday: 7:05 am

Evening Services

Sunday-Monday & Wednesday-Thursday (Minha/Arbit): **4:15 pm**

Come to evening minyan and enjoy a slice of pizza on us!

(see inside for Fast of Tebeth schedule)

Reminder: If you choose not to wear a mask when permissible, you represent & warrant that you’re fully vaccinated. If requested, you must wear a well-fitted mask wherever & whenever required.

If you’re eligible for the vaccine booster, we encourage it, and if your child is eligible to be vaccinated, we encourage that too. Once you’ve been boosted/vaccinated, please send vaccination proof to info@shearithisrael.org.

FAST OF TEBETH (Tuesday, December 14)

Dawn (Fast Begins) | 5:44 am

Morning Service | 7:05 am

Minha & Arbit | 4:00 pm

End of Fast | 4:49 pm

THIS SATURDAY NIGHT

Parent-Child Learning & Pizza *with Shearith Israel Clergy*

THIS Saturday Night, December 11 | 5:45 pm

This session will be led by Rev. Z. Edinger

For elementary school children and their parents or grandparents

THIS SUNDAY

Mapping the Genetic Identity of *Bnei Anusim*

Rediscovering a Lost Jewish Community - The Role of Genetic Research

with Dr. Karl Skorecki & Dr. Inês Nogueiro of Bar-Ilan University

Sunday, December 12 | 10:00 am | On Zoom

Dr. Karl Skorecki, Dean of Bar-Ilan University's Azrieli Faculty of Medicine in Tzfat, has opened to us a lost chapter in Jewish history - the fate of *anusim*, Iberian Jews who were forced to convert to Catholicism in the 15th and 16th centuries.

Register for the presentation at shearithisrael.org/bnei-anusim.

Jewish Cemeteries in Jamaica

THIS Sunday, December 12 | 2:00 pm Eastern Time

Refer to our emails for the livestream link

On Sephardic World this Sunday, the Jamaican Jewish Cemeteries Preservation Fund (JJCPF) are launching their database of Jewish burial grounds. Rachel Frankel and Joseph de Leon will discuss this important project, which helps fill a gap in our knowledge, as well as the need to preserve these historic Jewish sites.

Rachel Frankel, principal of the firm Rachel Frankel Architecture, is also the conservation architect behind the restoration of our historic West 11th Street cemetery. To learn more about our cemetery renewal project, visit shearithisrael.org/west-11th-street-cemetery-renewal-project.

THIS WEEK'S KIDDUSH SPONSORS

Susan & Avery Neumark, in memory of Susan's brother, Edward Adler & in honor of the Bar Mitzvah anniversary of Samuel Neumark

Manuel Vazquez-Senior, in memory of Angel Vasquez & Ana Senior
Alexander & Muriel Seligson, in honor of Jacob Seligson's recitation of the *haftarah* last week

COMING UP

Rabbi Swap Shabbat Series:

Rabbi Shaul Robinson of Lincoln Square Synagogue

Shabbat Morning, December 18

"The Younger Child in the Book of Genesis - Is Weakness Moral?"

Attend 4:15 pm Evening Services - and enjoy a slice of pizza on us!

Making a minyan has never been so tasty!

Register for services at shearithisrael.org or via links in our emails.

Sponsor an Outdoor Kiddush!

Enjoying our new outdoor kiddush? We could use a couple of sponsors each week to help maintain the warmth of our community!

To sponsor, visit shearithisrael.org/outdoor-kiddush.

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday Night, January 8, 2022

The Sisterhood Presents: The History of Jewish Comedy

Wednesday, December 22 | 10:00 am-4:00 pm

Esther Goldfarb Memorial Blood Drive

Refer to our emails for the signup link

Finish off the year by giving the gift of life at *Caring Connection's* blood drive.

Check-in volunteers needed:

This drive will be open to vaccinated participants only, so we'll need volunteers to check for proof of vaccination. Contact rosenberg@shearithisrael.org if interested.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mazal tob to **Aviva & Marvin Sussman**, upon their grandson Ethan Charles Sussman (son of Dalia & Eric Sussman) becoming a Bar Mitzvah.