

Joseph, the Rationalist Seer

Last year I wrote that the story of Joseph told in this week's Parasha was a kind of "wisdom novella," a classic tale of the use of wisdom in leadership. That wisdom consists in finding and identifying the underlying principles involved, and seeking a unitary scheme whereby that unifying principle is integrated. The advice which Joseph offers Pharaoh could have been suggested by any modern economist, after all! Even the dreams of Pharaoh are, in their own way, quite logical: "Nightmarish" worries about economic security are quite common among chief executives!

And yet this "advice" Joseph offers is very much in the mold of prophetic tradition, the tradition of the "seer." It is very much a story of prognostication, about predicting the future. Joseph even has a "diviner's goblet," a cup used for reading portents, for prophesying future events. Joseph's message is very much the traditional prophecy of impending "doom and gloom;" which can only be avoided (at least partially)" by following his instructions. That message is intimated to Pharaoh in the form of a nightmarish dream. And Joseph, in interpreting the "dream," serves as an "oracle," in the sense that the prophet's function at an oracle is to interpret omens.

As we read this parasha during the holiday of Hanukkah, I am always reminded how much our Judaism serves as a bridge between the classic Irrationalism of the ancient East and the Rationalism of the Hellenistic West. The monotheism of Judaism is "on the road" to rationality," without leaving the classic tradition of prophecy. Couching the rational plan of Joseph in terms of traditional prophecy gives Joseph's plans a degree of humility. Joseph does not claim absolute "knowledge;" "God alone knows the solution," but the prophet can interpret and suggest. Perhaps Socrates was more certain of his knowledge, but Socrates too was portrayed by Plato as more humbly taking on the mantle of the prophet. Our monotheism is akin to Pre-Socratic Greek philosophers like Xenophanes who sought to find unifying patterns in the cosmos, in place of man being caught up in the chance crossfire (terrifying or ridiculous) of competing powers. Rather, there is a unitary chain of causation which follows universal rules. As Joseph emphasizes in his explication to Pharaoh: "The dream of Pharaoh is One."



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL
The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Shabbat Mikkets-Rosh Hodesh-Hanukkah

December 3-4, 2021

SCHEDULE

Candle Lighting (6 Hanukkah & Shabbat) | 4:11 pm

Friday Evening Services | 4:00 pm

Friday Night Lights | following services | *2021-22 season sponsored by the Julis-Rabinowitz family* | *Session sponsor: Anonymous, in memory of Ezra b. Yitzhak*

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

Shabbat Afternoon Class will NOT meet this week.

Shabbat Afternoon Services | 4:05 pm

Shabbat Ends, Hanukkah Candlelighting (7) | 4:55 pm

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

Weekday Service Times

Morning Services

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

Evening Services

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

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

Reminder: If you choose not to wear a mask when permissible, you represent and warrant that you are fully vaccinated. If requested, you must wear a well-fitted mask wherever and 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.

MUSICAL NOTES

This Shabbat, the choir will perform special and rarely heard melodies composed by Jacques F. HaLevy, and George F. Handel.

Generously sponsored by Ety Bousso, in memory of Jacob and David Bousso
You can hear selections from Shearith Israel's Hanukkah liturgy, including a composition from Jacques F. HaLevy, on our website any time.

HANUKKAH

Youth Hanukkah Lighting & Celebration

THIS SUNDAY, 8th Night of Hanukkah, December 5 | 4:15pm - 5:15pm

Families are invited to a Hanukkah get-together in the Paved Paradise pavilion!

4:15 - 4:20 pm: Hanukkah greetings by Rivka Wiznia

4:20 - 4:45 pm: "Glow in the Dark" art projects

4:45 - 5:15 pm: Rev. Z Edinger and Rabbi Rohde leading a spirited sing-along and Hanukkah lighting with treats

Register at shearithisrael.org/csiyouth5782.

Last chance to register for access to all these great films!

Shearith Israel is a proud co-sponsor of the Menemsha

2021 Virtual Hanukkah Film Festival

Begins on the first night of Hanukkah, November 28

Use our code "CSINYC" to get a 25% discount!

(\$36 instead of \$48 for the entire festival!)

Celebrate the Hanukkah season with 8 nights of award-winning new films, available to view from the comfort of your home! A new film will be released each night of Hanukkah for registered participants to view, and all films will remain available for the rest of the holiday in case you miss them.

Visit hanukkahfilmfestival.com to register and view details on all the films, and don't forget to sign up with our CSINYC discount code!

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

We mourn the loss of **Serge Naggar**. Condolences to his wife, **Jean Naggar**.

COMING UP

Attend our 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.

Mapping the Genetic Identity of *Bnei Anusim*

Rediscovering a Lost Jewish Community - The Role of Genetic Research

with Dr. Karl Skorecki & Dr. Inés 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.

SAVE THE DATE

Shabbat Morning, December 18

Rabbi Swap Shabbat Series:

Rabbi Shaul Robinson of Lincoln Square Synagogue

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

Esther Goldfarb Memorial Blood Drive

Finish off the year by giving the gift of life at *Caring Connection's* upcoming blood drive at Shearith Israel. Follow our emails for forthcoming details.

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 srosenberg@shearithisrael.org if interested.

PRESERVING PAVED PARADISE

A successful second phase of fundraising will enable us to preserve and maintain this wonderful outdoor space for years to come.

Our Phase 2 Fundraising Goal: \$150,000

To donate, visit shearithisrael.org/preserving-paved-paradise.