

(debar torah continued from back) One person can't show up for work because his wife gave birth. Other excuses sound comical ("brewing beer" and "scorpion bit him"). Relevant for us are the people who are absent from work in order to worship their gods or their ancestors. For example, Sawadjyt is absent from work for two days to give an offering to his god and another three days to offer libations to his dead father.

We see from this document that corvée workers under Ramses II were regularly allowed to leave work for a few days in order to worship their gods. Moshe's request, then, was normal and very reasonable. We would not expect Pharaoh to just free his slaves outright, especially in an age when slavery was generally accepted. However, Pharaoh fails to live up to the moral standards even of his own time compared to the way other workers were treated under his command. Hashem tells Moshe to make this request not to deceive Pharaoh—He knew it would not work anyway. Rather, as Rabbi Isaac Arama (Spain, 1420-1494) explains, the goal is to show everyone just how stubborn Pharaoh is that he cannot even give in to a small and routine request.

If Pharaoh can be that ruthless, then he surely deserves all the punishments coming to him. As the Psalmist states:

עַם נָבַר תִּתְבָּרַר וְעַם עֲקָשׁ תִּתְפַּתֵּל, כִּי אֶתָּה עִם עֲנִי תוֹשִׁיעַ וְעֲנִיִּים רַמּוֹת תִּשְׁפִּיל.

With the pure, You act purely, and with the perverse, You are wily. It is you who deliver lowly folk, but haughty eyes You humble.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Hazak u' Barukh to Bentsi Cohen for completing Zohar this week for the third time.

The Three Day Journey: Fact or Fake Out? Rabbi Hidary

At the burning bush, God instructs Moshe to go to Pharaoh and request a three-day reprieve to the Israelites to travel to the desert and worship their God (Exodus 3:18). In fact, Moshe makes exactly this request (5:3), which he repeats during each stage of negotiation during the plagues (8:21-25; 10:7-11, 24, 26). Pharaoh is so stubborn that he only concedes the smallest bit of permission after tremendous pressure from the plagues and from his own advisors, and even then he reneges once the plague is finished.

Abravanel (1437-1508) asks the obvious ethical question here:

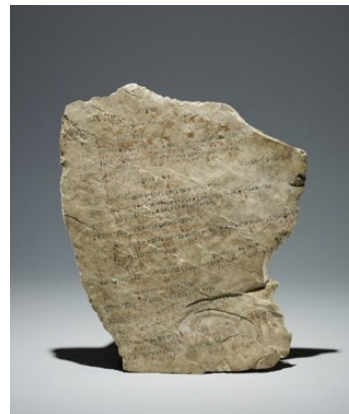
How could the Almighty instruct Moshe to utter a falsehood in His name? Wouldn't it have been far better for him to have said plainly: "Free My people from the burdens of Egypt?"

Rabbi Shmuel David Luzzato (Italy, 1800-1865) provides an answer:

This request was undoubtedly not made in good faith since they had not the slightest intention of returning to Egypt. But it was justified on the grounds that Pharaoh would certainly have had no scruples about enslaving them again on their return.

Nevertheless, we still have to wonder why Moshe needs to resort to this type of ruse. Hashem knows that Pharaoh is going to deny the request anyway and Hashem can easily demand the full freedom that he will miraculously bring about in any case. What is the purpose of this deception?

Better knowledge of the ancient corvée (forced labor tax) system can help illuminate this ruse. Archaeologists have discovered a limestone tablet in Egypt that dates to the 40th year of Ramses II, likely the Pharaoh of the Exodus. The tablet is an attendance roster of who was absent for work that year. It lists forty names of workers, the dates they were absent and the reason for the absence. (continued on inside panel)



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Shabbat Bo *January 15-16, 2016*

Hertz Pentateuch: Torah Reading: p. 248; Haftarah: p. 263
Kaplan Living Torah: Torah Reading: p. 300; Haftarah: p. 1102

CANDLE LIGHTING | 4:35 pm

MINHAH | 4:45pm

FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS | following evening services | Rabbi Hidary gives a talk on "Wrapped in Writing: The Significance of Tefillin" *2015-2016 Season Sponsored by the Julis Family*

ZEMIROT | 8:15 am | Main Sanctuary

SHAHARIT (NISHMAT) | 9:00 am | Rabbi Hidary will deliver a sermon on "The Chief Judge: Bringing Divine Justice Down to Earth"

TOT SHABBAT | Ages 0-4 | 10:00 am | Levy Auditorium

YOUTH GROUPS | Ages 5-12 | 10:00 am | Elias Room

JR. CONGREGATION | Ages 5-12 | 10:30 am | Little Synagogue

KIDDUSH | Levy Auditorium

TOPICS IN JEWISH PHILOSOPHY | Esther Hidary | 3:30 pm | For high school students | Held at the Hidary home, 1 W 85th St Apt. 6A

SEUDAH SHELISHIT AND SPECIAL SHABBAT AFTERNOON SHIUR | Rabbi Hidary on the topic "What's Missing from the Song at the Sea?" | 3:30 pm | *The Spring semester is sponsored by Lewis Lipsey*

MINHAH/ARBIT | 4:30 pm

KETER SHEM TOB | Rabbi Hidary | Main Sanctuary

HABDALAH | 5:21 pm

Weekday Service Times

Mornings: Sun. 8:00 AM, Monday (MLK Day)- 8:00 AM

Tues-Thur. 7:15 AM, Fri. Dec. 25, 8:00 AM

Evenings: Sun., Mon., Wed., Thurs.: 6:30 PM (Arbit only)

See inside for details about MLK Weekend Updates

UPCOMING EVENTS AND INITIATIVES

Tu B'Shebat Seder

Sunday Night, January 24 | 7:00 pm

Join Rabbi Meir Soloveichik for an evening of toasting, eating and learning Torah. Special singing contribution by Rabbi Ira Rohde.

Meanwhile, our younger members, under age 12, will enjoy their own holiday repast and activities led by Yona Glass and a special appearance by our in-house fruit juggler, Rabbi Soloveichik. Register by **THIS TUESDAY**, January 19 for our adult or youth track at: shearithisrael.org/tu-b'shebat-seder

Women's Service

Saturday, January 30 | 9:00 am

By and for women, these services are an opportunity for women to lead prayer, read from the Torah and perform the rituals associated with our services. We welcome the opportunity to celebrate momentous occasions - such as a girl becoming bat mitzvah or a bride before her wedding - in the context of our service. To participate contact lrohde-csi@yahoo.com.

Celebrate Pesah with Shearith Israel in New York or in Israel

Once again, Shearith Israel members will have the opportunity to celebrate Pesah at the Inbal Hotel in Jerusalem. Rabbi Soloveichik will lead our unique Rambam Haggadah (Seder), deliver shiurim, and lead us on special tiyulim. We look forward to getting together with our many Shearith Israel members and alumni who make Israel their home. To register or make inquiries, contact Ariel Tours directly at arieltours.com/csi.

Enroll in CSI's Text Messaging Notification Service

Many of our members and friends enjoy attending our special programs and events such as community meals, public lectures, etc. However, we know how busy you are and how easy it is to overlook an email or registration deadline; we want to help make it easier for you. We have set up a special text message service that can remind you when RSVP deadlines are approaching. We can also alert you of synagogue schedule changes, weather emergencies, security incidents or last minute class cancellations. To subscribe to our service, check our weekly emails for specific instructions. Please be assured, we will only text you for those alerts you have selected and will only use this on an as-needed basis.

Young Couples and Families Shabbat Luncheon Fiesta Saturday, February 6 Following Morning Services

Young Couples and Families are invited to join Rabbi Soloveichik for this fun Mexican-themed Shabbat luncheon. We've got a great group of young couples and families who enjoy getting together and inviting their friends to experience the best of Shearith Israel. Childcare will be provided. To register, go to shearithisrael.org/young-couples-and-families-luncheon

MLK Day Weekend Updates

- ◇ Rabbi Hidary's and Sjimon Den Hollander's Sunday morning classes will meet as usual.
- ◇ PTTS will not meet on Sunday.
- ◇ Our office will be closed this Monday in observance of MLK Day.
- ◇ Toddler program will not meet on Monday.
- ◇ Bet midrash will not meet on Monday.

WEEKDAY JUDAIC EDUCATION

For schedule and class details go to: shearithisrael.org/content/judaic-education-and-major-lectures

Sunday

- ◇ **The Book of Kings** | Rabbi Hidary | 8:40 am
- ◇ Fall semester ends Jan 17. Spring Semester begins Feb 7.
- ◇ **Saadia Gaon's Book of Beliefs and Opinions** | Sjimon den Hollander | 9:30 am

Monday

- Second Temple Jewish History** | Rabbi Hidary | 7:00 pm
- ◇ No class this week. Resumes on Feb 8.
- ◇ **Bet Midrash** | Rabbi Hidary, Phil Getz, Dr. Josh Eisen, Rabbi Ira Rohde, Meira Wokenfeld | 8:00 pm
- ◇ No class this week. Resumes on Feb 8.

Tuesday

- ◇ **Rambam's Mishneh Torah** | Rabbi Hidary | 7:45 am
- ◇ No class this week. Spring semester begins Feb 2.
- ◇ **Feasts and Fasts: The Festivals in Jewish Thought- A Class for Women** | Rabbi Soloveichik | 9:00 am
- ◇ **Talmud Class: Tractate Rosh Hashana and the Philosophy of Jewish Time** | Rabbi Soloveichik | 8:00 pm | *Spring semester sponsored by Gregory Bell*

Please consider sponsoring a class. Go to: shearithisrael.org/sponsoraaclass

Parnas Office Hours

Louis Solomon would be delighted to meet with you. Please schedule a visit at parnas@shearithisrael.org.

Our next public tour is:
Tuesday, February 9 at 11:00 am