

(continued from back panel) He then accuses them of being spies, which in essence means that they lacked faithfulness and were not trustworthy. He insists that they bring their youngest brother to Egypt in order to prove their honesty knowing full well that they would first need to pledge to their father that they would faithfully protect him.

The brothers realise that the hardships they are faced with are divine retribution for the cold indifference that they showed towards their brother twenty years earlier.

They said each man to his brother: “Truly, we are guilty concerning our brother! That we saw his heart’s distress when he implored us and we did not listen. Therefore this distress has come upon us!” (42:21)

When the time comes to return to Egypt and Binyamin must be brought to the adamant viceroy, astonishingly it is now Yehuda, once the initiator of the sale of his brother Yoseph, who dedicates his own life to protecting his younger brother Binyamin at all costs.

Yehuda said to his father: ‘Send the lad with me...I will act as his pledge, at my hand may you seek him! If I do not bring him back to you and set him in your presence, I will be culpable-for-sin against you all the days to come.’ (43:8-9)

The moment of that very defence is the scene that opens our parasha. Yehuda is bravely and poignantly fighting for one brother’s welfare in front of another brother he once cruelly sold. We now read of a man who has allowed his heart to love again after years of restricting it and who ultimately chooses kinship over politics and personal agenda. In that moment a bond was forged between Yehuda and Binyamin, orchestrated by Yoseph in the hopes that brotherhood would ultimately prevail. Even Yehuda and Yoseph collaborate with each other by the story’s end.

In this world we protect ourselves in many ways. But at times we protect ourselves so much that we miss the most important and meaningful relationships in our lives. It is an art to know when and how to shield ourselves from heartache. It takes wisdom and bravery to wield it but it takes greater wisdom and bravery to know when to set it down. The stories of brothers at the close of Genesis teach us that our most glorious moments are the ones in which we choose to lower our shields and stand before each other in vulnerability with hands outstretched for embrace.

Yoseph was not perfect. But he believed that relationships and the bonds of humanity were the highest aspects of our lives. At the base of that belief was the soul of a boy who dreamed and was not afraid to love. The bond forged by Yehuda and Binyamin lives on in the Jewish people. Yehuda and Binyamin are the only tribes of the original twelve that survive today. The commitment to love and brotherhood over personal gain that Yoseph so cared for has, in his brothers’ bond, stood the test of time.

A Note About Our Weekly Dibrei Torah

Our Debar Torah this week is written by **Rabbi Joseph Dweck**, Senior Rabbi of the S&P Sephardi Community of the United Kingdom. Over the course of this year, in addition to our Shearith Israel cast of writers, we will expose you to guest Debar Torah contributors from other Spanish and Portuguese communities around the world. Thank you Rabbi Dweck for this week’s excellent Debar Torah!

“Philadelphia”
Rabbi Joseph Dweck, Senior Rabbi of the S&P Sephardi Community of the United Kingdom

“We have flown the air like birds and swum the sea like fishes, but have yet to learn the simple act of walking the earth like brothers.”
- Martin Luther King Jr.

Each year, for four weeks, we read the saga of a family embroiled in strife, heartache and sadness. The pages of the Torah’s opening book are filled with death, betrayal, jealousy and even hatred. It would make for good cinema but, as such, it also makes for important lessons about life and relationships.

The lives of our forefather Yaakov together with his wives and children are the subject of our story. One can learn a great deal about a nation from its origins and relationships are at the core of ours.

While there were significant differences in philosophy within the family, those differences did not cause the struggles. It went deeper. It was the fear of not being able to share those differences in a supportive and constructive environment. It was the worry that one’s personal feelings, ideas and perspectives would be scorned rather than respected and there would be no welcoming space in which differences could be expressed.

Insecurities developed from an early stage due to Yaakov having more than one wife, and thus, more than one mother in the family. It is natural for there to be elements of favouritism and unequal attention in such an environment. One place where inequity was evident in the family was with Yoseph, Rachel’s son. He held a special place in his father’s heart. His brothers knew this causing their feeling of animosity to grow. Yoseph exacerbates the situation by telling his brothers of dreams he had been having in which his father and brothers bow to him. Upon hearing this, animosity turns to hatred and deep rifts rip into the fabric of the family.

It may be easy to blame Yoseph for being arrogant in sharing his grandiose dreams with his brothers but is it accurate to do so? Yaakov does indeed openly chastise him for sharing them. However, his father also holds them in his heart knowing that they are not to be coldly rejected.


When we look at Yoseph’s life we find that he is not an individual who is self-centred and insensitive to others’ feelings. On the contrary, he is a compassionate, caring and faithful person. He concerns himself with the welfare of the forsaken prisoners, he refuses to betray the trust of his master and he ultimately dedicates the rest of his life to faithfully building a country that he was ordered by Pharaoh to protect.

These attributes should cause us to look again at the revelation of Yoseph’s dreams and wonder if, rather than boasting, he was trying to share a personal experience with his family in the, albeit naive, expectation that among his brothers he would find a safe place in which he could express the more intimate aspects of his subconscious thoughts. Perhaps being seventeen and of a caring heart he had not properly taken into consideration the extent of anger and upset that was brewing towards him in the minds of his siblings.

But Yoseph quickly learned just how deep that fraternal ill will ran when his brothers sold him into slavery. There is no question that in order to do such a cold hearted act they would have had to suppress the natural empathic feelings of the human heart and develop firm emotional callouses to go through with it.

One can look at the ordeals through which Yoseph put his brothers when he encounters them twenty years later as petty revenge. I disagree and instead would suggest that Yoseph was actually trying to move his brothers to break free from the emotional callousness that they had developed and to choose love and brotherhood over hate and insensitivity.

He first requires them to consciously revisit the responsibility that they suppressed for selling him. (continued on side panel)



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL

The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Shabbat Vayiggash

January 6-7, 2017

Hertz Pentateuch: p. 169 ; Haftarah p. 178

Kaplan Living Torah: p. 222 ; Haftarah: 1086

CANDLE LIGHTING | 4:26 pm

MINHAH | 4:30 pm | Main Sanctuary

FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS | Following evening services | Rabbi Soloveichik gives a talk on the topic “The Often Unknown Origin of Eishet Hayil” | 2016-2017 season sponsored by the Julis Family

ZEMIROT | 8:15 am | Main Sanctuary

SHAHARIT (NISHMAT) | 9:00 am | Rabbi Soloveichik delivers a shiur on the topic “The Most Important Invention in Human History”

TOT SHABBAT WITH LIZ AND SHANADE | Ages 0-4 | 10:00 am | Levy Auditorium

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

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

KIDDUSH | Levy Auditorium | Sponsored by Rachel Brody and Michael Lustig in honor of Rabbi Ira Rohde in appreciation for all he does for our youth in preparing to become bnai and bnot mitzvah. Kiddush contributor: Suzanne Morad in memory of her mother, Manijeh Morad (Rachel bat Sara v'Avraham), on 11 months since her passing.

SEUDAH SHELISHIT AND PIRKEI ABOT AFTERNOON SHIUR | Rabbi Soloveichik | 3:30 pm | Levy Auditorium | Fall semester sponsored by Lewis Lipsey

MINHAH/ARBIT | 4:20 PM

HABDALAH | 5:12 pm

Weekday Service Times

Mornings: Sunday: 8:00 AM, Monday-Friday: 7:15 AM, Evenings (Arbit Only): Monday - Thursday: 6:30PM

Fast of Tebeth (‘Asarah beTebeth)- Sunday, January 8

Fast Begins: 5:53 am

Morning Service: 8:00 am

Evening Minhah (with tefillin): 4:00 pm in Large Synagogue

End of Fast: 5:04 pm

UPCOMING PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

Jerusalem's Jubilee- A Three Part Lecture Series
Join us this Monday for the launch of a three-part lecture series marking the calendar year in which we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the unification of this holiest city.

Part 1: Rabbi Soloveichik– This Monday, January 9 | 7:00 pm
Early American Presidents and Jerusalem: Lessons from Yesteryear for Today


Part 2: Rabbi Riskin– Next Shabbat Morning, January 14
The United City and the United Nations: The Allure and Sanctity of Jerusalem

Part 3: Rabbi Soloveichik - Shabbat Morning, January 21
The First Jewish Ruler of Jerusalem in 2000 Years: The Remarkable Story of Viscount Herbert Samuel

To sponsor this important series, go to shearithisrael.org/jerusalem_jubilee

The United City and the United Nations: The Allure and Sanctity of Jerusalem
Rabbi Shlomo Riskin
Shabbat Morning, January 14 | Following morning services

Rabbi Riskin is one of the founders and the first spiritual leader of the Lincoln Square Synagogue in New York, which he led for 19 years. In 1983, at the peak of his profession, he left New York to become the rabbi of Efrat, a new Israeli city 8 miles south of Jerusalem, which he helped found and establish. Efrat is now a flourishing community of close to 12,000 people. Rabbi Riskin founded and serves as Chancellor and Rosh Yeshiva of Ohr Torah Stone Institutions, a network of over 3,000 students ranging from junior-high schools to post-graduate programs preparing the leaders for world Jewry. For sponsorship opportunities, go to shearithisrael.org/jerusalem_jubilee.



Shabbat Dinner For Teens and Their Entire Families with Rabbi Soloveichik
Friday night, January 20 | Following Friday Night Lights
Teens and their families are invited to a special Shabbat dinner with Rabbi Soloveichik and his family.
Register at shearithisrael.org/teens-Hollywood.

Exclusive Tour of “The First Jewish Americans: Freedom and Culture In The New World” Exhibit
Rabbi Meir Soloveichik
The New-York Historical Society
170 Central Park West (At 77th street)
Sunday, January 29 | 11:00 am
SOLD OUT

If you are still interested in attending the tour but got shut out this time around, let us know. We are investigating the possibility of holding an additional tour on another date.
To indicate your interest, please email slandau@shearithisrael.org. Please note your name, email address, and phone number.

Incredible Kids Mega Challah Bake
Super (Challah) Bowl Sunday, February 5 | 10:30 am
At the New York Grand Hyatt in Midtown

Shearith Israel is a proud sponsor of the upcoming Incredible Kids Mega Challah Bake. CSI Youth are invited to join Jewish children from all over New York City to get together for the Incredible Kids Mega Challah Bake. The event is the brainchild of a diverse group of Jewish moms of every style, observance, and denomination, all with one common goal: unity. The event will host approximately 1,000 Jewish children, all ready to roll up their sleeves and make their very own challah loaves. Last year, the Guinness Book of World Records was on hand to declare it the world's largest baking event. Want to help be a part of trying to break a new record? Register at kidschallahbake.com/rsvp.

Save the Date:
Shabbat Tu B'Shebat Seder and Public Discussion
Featuring New York Times Best Selling Author:
Seth (Yossi) Siegel
Friday Night, February 10
Following Friday Night Lights

Join Rabbi Meir Soloveichik and Yossi Seigel for a special evening featuring both the seder as well as a public discussion of Yossi Siegel’s New York Times bestselling book, *Let There Be Water: Israel’s Solution for a Water-Starved World*.

WEEKDAY JUDAIC EDUCATION
For details go to: shearithisrael.org/judaic-education

Sunday
◇ **Saadia Gaon's Book of Beliefs and Opinions** | Sjimón den Hollander | 8:45 am

Monday
◇ **Monday Night Learning: A Series on Early America and The Jews** | Rabbi Soloveichik | 7:00 pm | Select Mondays

Tuesday
◇ **Katzap Class and Breakfast** | Following Morning Services
◇ **Feasts and Fasts: The Festivals in Jewish Thought - A Class for Women** | Rabbi Soloveichik | 9:00 am
◇ **Talmud Class: Tractate Sanhedrin** | Rabbi Soloveichik | 7:00 pm

Wednesday
◇ **NEW: Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Shearith Israel: A Monthly Q & A** | Z. Edinger | 7:00 pm | On select Wednesdays | Next class on January 25 | Email questions to zedinger@shearithisrael.org.

To sponsor a single class or an entire semester, go to shearithisrael.org/sponsoraaclass

To find out when your favorite class is held, canceled or for special topics, go to shearithisrael.org/join-our-mailing-lists to select which emails you’d like to receive.

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:
Wednesday, January 11 at 11:00 am

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mazal Tob to Rivka and Marc Wiznia on the birth of a son.

Welcome New Members Meryl Schlussel and Joseph Mark to the Shearith Israel family.