



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL
The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Shabbat Vaera
January 8-9, 2016

Hertz Pentateuch: Torah Reading: p. 232; Haftarah: p. 244
Kaplan Living Torah: Torah Reading: p. 280; Haftarah: p. 1096

CANDLE LIGHTING | 4:27 pm

MINHAH | 4:30pm

FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS | following evening services | Rabbi Soloveichik gives a talk on “The First Painting of a Bar Mitzvah”
Sponsored by the Julis Family

ZEMIROT | 8:15 am | Main Sanctuary

SHAHARIT (NISHMAT) | 9:00 am | Rabbi Soloveichik will deliver a seminar after services on “The Mamas and the Rav Pappas: Why We Celebrate a Siyyum”

TOT SHABBAT | Ages 0-4 | 10:00 am | Elias Room

YOUTH GROUPS | Ages 5-12 | 10:00 am | Children’s Library

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

KIDDUSH LUNCHEON | Levy Auditorium | *Sponsored by the Congregation celebrating Aharon Soloveichik's siyyum on five of the orders of Mishnah in honor of his having become a bar mitzvah*

TOPICS IN JEWISH PHILOSOPHY | Rabbi 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 Soloveichik on the topic “What ’The Ten Commandments’ Got Wrong” | 3:30 pm

MINHAH/ARBIT | 4:20 pm

KETER SHEM TOB | Rabbi Hidary | Main Sanctuary

HABDALAH | 5:13 pm

Weekday Service Times

Mornings: Sun. 8:00 AM, Mon-Thur. 7:15 AM, Fri. Dec. 25, 8:00 AM
Evenings: Sun., Mon., Wed., Thurs.: 6:30 PM (Arbit only)

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 ariel-tours.com/csi. Early bird pricing guaranteed through January 11.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mazal Tob to Nathan Blum on becoming a Bar Mitzvah. Congratulation to the entire Cardozo family, Nathan is the son of Dr. Yossi Blum, the grandson of Debbie Cardozo Smith and the great-grandson of Irma Cardozo.

Mazal Tob to Rachel Neumark Herlands and Jonathan Herlands on the wedding of their son William to Natalia Emanuel.

Mazal Tob to Samuel & Arezoo Jesselson on the birth of a baby boy, named Nethaniel this week at the synagogue.

Mazal Tob to Aharon Soloveichik on becoming a Bar Mitzvah. Congratulations to his parents, Rabbi Meir and Layaliza Soloveichik.

We mourn the loss of Maurice Bendahan. Condolences to his wife Yvette and his daughter Miriam.

We morn the loss of our esteemed member, the Honorable, Judith Kaye. The funeral is expected to take place on Monday morning. Condolences to the family.

The Plague of Crocodiles

Z. Edinger (Based on D. Sperber)

Exodus 7:26: And if thou refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite all thy borders with frogs [Tsefardi'im].

ואם־מֵאֵן אַתָּה לְשַׁלַּח הַנֶּחָשׁ אֲנֹכִי נִקְרָאתִי כָל־גְּבוּלָךְ בַּצַּפְרָדִּיעִים:

Ibn Ezra relates that there are two translations for the Hebrew word “Tsefardi'im”: המפרשים נחלקו במלת צפרדעים. ורבים אמרו שהוא מין דג נמצא במצרים ויקרא בלשון ערב אלתמס"ח. ויוצא מן הנהר וחוטף בני אדם. ואחרים אמרו כי הם הנמצאים ברובי הנהרות שמשמיעים קול והוא הנכון בעיני והוא הידוע

Many said it refers to a species of fish found in Egypt, known as al-timsah in Arabic, which comes out of the river and seizes human beings. Others say they are found in most rivers and that they make a sound. I agree with the latter view, which is well-known.

According to the first identification, the *tsefarde'a* is the same as the Arabic *timsah*, or what we know as the crocodile. According to the second identification, preferred by Ibn Ezra, it is a frog, which makes a croaking sound in lakes and rivers. While Ibn Ezra (and most modern translations) prefer to identify the *Tsefarde'a* as a frog, Nahmanides and most other classical rabbinic sources identify it as a crocodile. R. Bahya, a disciple of Nahmanides, wrote: *to this very day the creeping water creature known as the timsah remains there [in Egypt.] There it breeds, and it is said that sometimes it comes out of the Nile where it lives, rising onto the river's bank and swallowing whatever it finds, even two or three humans at a time. Neither spear nor arrow can overcome its body, unless aimed for the belly. Physicians say it is venomous and that touching its body, even after its death, is harmful to man. It is a sort of frog... This is how R. Hananel interpreted the text.*

Similarly, the Karaite exegete Aaron b. Joseph ha-Rofe (circa 1250-1320) explained: "*Some say it looks like a fish, that it is the timsah, moving its upper jaw, unlike all other lowly creatures, and that it seizes humans and animals passing by along the shore...*"

Egypt indeed has crocodiles in the Nile, but it is not clear why the rabbis should have identified the *Tsefardea'* as a Crocodile. An explanation can be found in the Midrash.

The Midrash Lekah Tov states: *Ba-tsefarde'im -- what is this word, tsefarde'a? There was a bird (tsipor) in the Nile that had intelligence (de'a), and when this bird called to them they came, and so they were named after this bird with intelligence: tsefar-de'a.*

According to this *midrash*, the crocodile was called *Tsefarde'a* after an intelligent bird that sat on it. In fact, there is such a bird, the *Plover Pluviancis Aegyptus*, that has a habit of sitting on the crocodile, these intelligent birds peck at the crocodile's teeth in search of parasites. The bird is extremely cautious and gives a call when fleeing from danger, thus also warning the crocodile.

Even in ancient times, as seen in Herodotus, (fifth century B.C.E.) the symbiotic relationship of this bird and the crocodile was well known: *...[the crocodile] cannot move its underjaw, and in this respect, too, it is singular, being the only animal in the world which moves the upper jaw but not the under. It has strong claws and a scaly skin, impenetrable upon the back. As it lies quietly in the river, it has the inside of its mouth constantly covered with leaches; hence it happens that, while all the other birds and beasts avoid it, with the trochilus it lives at peace, since it owes much to that bird: for the crocodile, when he leaves the water and comes out upon the land, is in the habit of lying with his mouth wide open, facing the western breeze: at such times the trochilus goes into his mouth and devours the leeches. This benefits the crocodile, who is pleased, and takes care not to hurt the trochilus.*

In truth, we cannot say for certain what the etymology of the Hebrew word *Tsefarde'a* is. But, the ancient understanding of the crocodile and its symbiotic relationship with an intelligent bird, led to the folk etymology of the word “*tsefardeah*” from *Tsipor-Dea* (intelligent bird) and thus to the identification of the crocodile as our *Tsefarde'a*.

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 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 lirohde-csi@yahoo.com.

Lost Ring

A valuable ring was found at the kiddush last Shabbat. If you believe this may be yours or know to whom it may belong - please contact Zachariah Edinger at zedinger@shearithisrael.org for its return.

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

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
Fall semester ends Jan 12. Spring semester begins 2/2.
- ◇ **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, January 12 at 11:00 am