

Shearith Israel Annual Gala

Wednesday, October 21

The gala is just over a week away!

Join us as we pay tribute to our longtime synagogue members and PTTS family,

Lloyd Zuckerberg and Charlotte Triefus and

Rabbi Shalom Morris.

Register at shearithisrael.org/gala to reserve your spot and be included in the tribute folio addendum.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mazal Tob to Alvi and Brenda Abuaf on the birth of a grandson, to their daughter Lauren Abuaf and Jason Behfarin.

Mazal Tob to Adam Jackson and Melissa Epstein on the birth of a son.

Mazal Tob to Dr. Nicholas Garo and Dr. Roberta de Oliveira on the birth of a son.

Welcome New Members Eliav and Nina Assouline to the Shearith Israel Family.

Thank you to Chaim Katzap for sponsoring Tuesday Morning Breakfasts.

Thank you to Connie Shapiro and the Solomon family for sponsoring the Simhat Torah dinner.

Thank you to all the teens who helped scoop ice cream at our Ice Cream Extravaganza on Simhat Torah.

Condolences to Joshua Sauberman on the passing of his grandfather, Seymour Zauberman.

The Divine Dictionary

Rabbi Richard Hidary

I was reading the dictionary. I thought it was a poem about everything.

- Steven Wright

Unlike ancient mythology that portrays the gods constructing the world through actions, Genesis narrates how God created everything with words. “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made” (33:6), writes the Psalmist, to emphasize God’s power to accomplish great feats with a mere breath. Furthermore, the significance of speech in the Genesis narrative goes even deeper as it reveals the fundamental inter-relationship between existence, thought and language. The founder of modern linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure, analyzes the essential role of language in how our minds process reality:

Psychologically, what are our ideas, apart from our language?

Ideas themselves probably do not exist or exist only in a form that may be described as amorphous. We should probably be unable according to philosophers and linguists to distinguish two ideas clearly without the help of a language. Consequently, the purely conceptual mass of our ideas, the mass separated from the language, is like a kind of shapeless nebula, in which it is impossible to distinguish anything initially... There is nothing at all distinct in thought before the linguistic sign.

Our internal minds can only think with words so that our fundamental conception of the external world depends on speech. If we plug Saussure’s insight back into Genesis we discover that the Creation narrative reveals not simply how God initially formed the universe but how humans continually construct reality. In the beginning, before we process sensory data, all is “chaos and void,” a shapeless mixture of particles. A digital camera records millions of pixels with perfect precision but the picture in itself contains no objects or faces. Only by assigning words to perceived patterns are we able to distinguish dark from light, liquid from solid, and inert objects from live beings.

Genesis 1, however, reveals yet another dimension of creation through language. Unlike Saussure who writes of perception of the world in human language, the Torah puts forth the first conception of the world using Divine language. It is true that Adam later coins words for each of the animals, but the first primordial terms derive from the Creator Himself. As Hakham José Faur writes, “In the mind of the Hebrews, the Universe is represented as the writing or active speech of God.”

What can we learn from God’s initial lexicon? The one word that links each act of creation is God’s evaluation of it as being “good = טוֹב” Each day’s activity extracts out of chaotic entropy one more element of order: light, heavens, land, and growth. The final telos of creation leads to animal and human life, the ultimate good. Human language can define objects and concepts through any number of distinctions. But the Torah here directs us to perceive the world through the Divine lens of morality. There will always be forces of destruction, chaos, and evil in the world; but as long as we evaluate our actions in keeping with the Divine goal of fruitful growth and increased life, then we can be sure that goodness will have the last Word.



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL

The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Shabbat Bereshith

October 9-10, 2015

Hertz Pentateuch: p. 2; Haftarah p. 21
Kaplan Living Torah: p. 2; Haftarah p. 1050

CANDLE LIGHTING | 6:07 pm

MINHAH | 6:15 pm

ZEMIROT | 8:15 am | Main Sanctuary

SHAHARIT (NISHMAT) | 9:00 am

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

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

ASSIGNED JR. CONGREGATION | Ages 5-12 | 10:30 am | Little Synagogue The next Assigned Jr. Congregation will be October 31

HATANIM LUNCHEON | Levy Auditorium | For registered guests | *Sponsored in honor of our Hatanim Seth Haberman and Ari Sherizen **

TOPICS IN JEWISH PHILOSOPHY | Rabbi Hidary | 5:00 pm | For high school students | Held at the Hidary home at 1 W 85th St Apartment 6A

SEUDAH SHELISHIT AND AFTERNOON SHIUR | Rabbi Soloveichik on the topic “The Rav vs. C.S. Lewis: A Debate About Bereshit” | 5:00 pm | *The fall semester is sponsored by Lewis Lipsey*

MINHAH/ARBIT | 6:00 pm

KETER SHEM TOB | Rabbi Hidary | Main Sanctuary

HABDALAH | 6:56 pm

**See event handout for full list of sponsors*

UPCOMING EVENTS

Succah Greens Composting Due Tuesday, October 13

After Succot, rather than throwing out your lulabim, take advantage of this special opportunity and leave your lulabim with us! The NYC Dept of Sanitation (DSNY) will collect our Succot organics for composting. Leave your lulabim with Z. Edinger before Tuesday, October 13 and we'll do the rest.

The NYC Marathon is Coming... Right to our Front Door!

The New York City Marathon is on November 1st. Best of luck to all Shearith Israel members who will be racing! As in past years, Shearith Israel is teaming up with JRunners to make ourselves available to those runners praying with the International Minyan for NYC Marathoners. Minyan-goers may check their tefillin, siddurim and tallesim with the Minyan organizers for pickup our portico which is close to the finish line. For more information, contact Saul Rosenblum at saulrmc@gmail.com or Peter Berkowsky at peterberkowsky@gmail.com.

2015 Al Warshawsky Memorial Lecture Thursday, October 22 | 8:00 pm

Co-sponsored by The Shearith Israel League and The American Sephardi Federation

Professor Stefan Reif will speak on the topic "Genizah Insights into the Jewish Homeland of a Thousand Years Ago." Light refreshments will be served.

Friday Night Lights Returns!

Friday, October 23 | Following Evening Services

As Shabbat begins earlier and the nights grow longer stay around for a bit after Friday evening services for an inspiring shiur delivered by Rabbi Soloveichik. There's no better way to transition from the workweek to Shabbat!

Singles Shabbat Dinner Friday Night, November 20 | Following Evening Services

Save the Date for our Singles Shabbat Dinner hosted by Rabbi Hidary. If you would like to be involved in planning the dinner, email rhidary@shearithisrael.org. Stay tuned for registration information.

OTHER INITIATIVES

Our New Yoetzet Halakha: Ilana Gadish

If you have any questions regarding Taharat Hamishpakha (Jewish Family Law), please contact our new Yoetzet Halakha, Ilana Gadish, at (646) 598 -1080 or nycyoetzet@gmail.com.

New Kiddush Sponsorship Opportunity

In addition to our weekly Kiddush sponsors and contributors we are now also accepting sponsors for the scotch and arak that we make available each week. To sponsor or contribute go to shearithisrael.org/scotch-and-arak-sponsorships

Register now for PTT'S Hebrew School Starts Sunday, October 18

Polonies Talmud Torah School, provides children and teens, ages 3-16, with a substantive Jewish education in a positive and engaging environment. Register at shearithisrael.org/hebrewschool

Contribute to the PTT'S Hebrew School Scholarship Fund

We offer many scholarships to ensure that all qualified applicants can receive a Jewish education. Please consider sponsoring a student for an academic year or semester or contributing to our Hebrew school scholarship fund with a tax deductible contribution of any amount. Go to shearithisrael.org/hebrew-school-scholarship-fund

WEEKDAY JUDAIC EDUCATION

Come join us for a new semester of classes with your favorite Rabbis and educators. To see the schedule, go to shearithisrael.org/content/judaic-education-and-major-lectures

STARTS THIS WEEK!

Sunday

- ◇ The Book of Kings | Rabbi Hidary | 8:40 am
- ◇ Saadia Gaon's Book of Beliefs and Opinions | Sjimon den Hollander | 9:30 am

Monday

- ◇ Second Temple Jewish History | Rabbi Hidary | 7:00 pm
- ◇ Bet Midrash | Rabbi Hidary, Phil Getz, Dr. Josh Eisen, Rabbi Ira Rohde, Meira Wokenfeld | 8:00 pm

Tuesday

- ◇ Rambam's Mishneh Torah | Rabbi Hidary | 7:45 am
- ◇ 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

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, October 13 at 11:00 am