

WEEKLY CLASSES:

Saadia Gaon's Book of Beliefs and Opinions
Rabbi Sjimon den Hollander | Sundays | 8:45-9:45 am

NEW! Entering the Land: The Book of Joshua
Rabbi David Silber | Sundays | 10:00 -11:30 am
(Tuition is \$275, but FREE for Shearith Israel members)
See inside for class details.

Tuesday Morning Women's Class
Rabbi Meir Soloveichik | Tuesdays | 9:00 am
IMPORTANT! Sign up to receive class notifications at
shearithisrael.org/join-our-email-lists.

Friday Night Lights
Rabbi Meir Soloveichik | Fridays | Following Evening Services
5779 Premiere on Friday Evening, October 19

A NOTE ON RABBI SOLOVEICHIK'S 5779 EVENING CLASSES
This Fall, instead of teaching a weekly Talmud class on Tuesdays, Rabbi Soloveichik will be delivering major lectures and shiurim on select Mondays and Tuesdays, with Mondays devoted to history topics, and Tuesdays focused on Torah and Talmudic subjects.

Dates will be announced in advance, so it is more important than ever for participants to subscribe to Shearith Israel's emails, and specifically, to Rabbi Soloveichik's email distribution for alerts and updates on these classes at shearithisrael.org/join-our-email-lists.

OPEN BET MIDRASH
Most Weekday Evenings | 5:15 pm until Evening Services
Learn your way: join a *habruta*, hear a short *debar torah*, or simply pick a *sefer* off the shelf.

DEBAR TORAH: SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW
— Z. EDINGER —

After the flood, God promised Noah that He will never again use a flood to destroy the world. God then offered a sign, the rainbow, to memorialize His promise to humanity. The implication of the verses in our parasha (chapter 9, verses 9-16) is that God created the rainbow to serve as a symbol of His promise not to flood the earth. Indeed, this is the plain understanding espoused by Ibn Ezra (12th c.). Rainbows were created after the flood. Saadia Gaon (10th c.) interpreted these verses differently: rainbows were not created after the flood, rather they were chosen as a symbol to remind us of God's promise. At first glance this debate seems to have little significance, but in fact this debate is about whether our understanding of Creation should conform to scientific knowledge.

In the ancient world, rainbows were understood to be a supernatural omen or message from the gods to mankind. Sarna describes them as ancient symbols of "divine bellicosity and hostility." In the words of SD Luzzatto (*Shadal*): "Ancient peoples thought that it was a messenger of a god (Iris), and entertained many vain beliefs about it. The Torah purified this concept of all its heretical elements and reformed it into a beneficial concept. The ancients likely used the rainbow for divination and soothsaying, since they believed it to be the messenger of a god. The Torah refuted this by saying that the rainbow is nothing but a symbol that there will never be another Flood." The Torah here uproots ancient accepted belief and informs us that the rainbows are not an evil omen but a divine symbol of peace.

Beginning with Aristotle, rainbows began to be understood as natural occurrences that appear when light refracts through water molecules in the air. If so, how could rainbows have been created only after the flood? Were there no rainbows during the generations between Creation and Noah? Did the natural world undergo some kind of essential change?

Because of these questions, most medieval scholars sided with Saadia interpreting the verses in our parasha to mean that the rainbow was given symbolic meaning after the flood, and not that it was actually created after the flood.

Nahmanides (13th c.) comments on Genesis 9:12 are notable. Well known for his supernatural understanding of biblical miracles, *Ramban* often criticizes Maimonides' rationalist tendency to interpret miracles as being a part of the natural order. Quite amazingly, however, here Nahmanides comments:

ואנחנו על כרחנו נאמין לדברי היונים שמלהט השמש באויר הלח יתה הקשת בתולדה, כי בכלי מים לפני השמש יראה כמראה הקשת,

"Against our will, we must believe the words of the Greeks that the rainbow comes about as a result of the sun's rays in the moist air, for the rainbow appears in a vessel of water placed in the sun." He then re-interprets the verse in the same way that Saadia did. Gersonides (*Ralbag*, 14th c.) goes so far as to quote Aristotle's *Meteorologica* ("ספר האורות") in describing the rainbow as a natural occurrence.

Why do all these medieval commentaries feel the need to reference Greek scholars? Why must they remind us that rainbows are natural phenomena? The answer lies in the history of science and the medieval world.

A renewed interest in science and philosophy arose during the golden age of Islam. This included the study of optics and rainbows. This interest spread from Islam into Christendom. Islamic theologians and scientists, such as *Al Kindi* (9th c.), *Ibn Al Hazen* (10th c.), *Ibn Sina* (Avicenna, 11th c.), and *Ibn Rushd* (Averroes, 12th c.); as well as Christian theologians *Robert Grosseteste* (12th c.), and *Theodoric of Frieberg* (13th c.) studied and wrote treatises about optics and rainbows.

For Jewish scholars of the era, these scientific studies could not be ignored. If rainbows could be created using a jar of water, how could anyone believe that the rainbow was a supernatural miracle created to remember God's promise? For this reason most medieval commentaries felt compelled to disagree with Ibn Ezra, the rainbow was not a supernatural sign, but rather a natural phenomenon that had been present since the world was created.



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL
The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue
Shabbat Noah
October 12-13, 2018

Hertz Pentateuch: p. 26; Haftarah p. 41
Kaplan Living Torah: p. 26; Haftarah p. 1054

CANDLE LIGHTING | 6:03 pm
EVENING SERVICES | 6:00 pm
MORNING SERVICES | Main Sanctuary | 8:15 am
WOMEN'S SERVICE | 9:00 am | featuring Barbara Sasson, in honor of her Bat Mitzvah | Little Synagogue
TOT SHABBAT | Ages 0-4 | 10:00 am | Fidanque Youth Room
YOUTH GROUPS | Ages 5-12 | 10:00 am | Fidanque Youth Room
SERMON | Rabbi Soloveichik
KIDDUSH LUNCHEON | Levy Auditorium with additional seating in the Elias Room | Sponsored by Sharon & Raphael Sasson, in honor of Barbara Sasson becoming a Bat Mitzvah.
SHABBAT AFTERNOON CLASS | Rabbi Soloveichik | 4:55 pm | "TOPIC" | Levy Auditorium
EVENING SERVICES | 5:55 pm
HABDALA | 6:50 pm

Weekday Service Times
Mornings:
Sunday: 8:00 am | Monday-Friday: 7:15 am
Evenings:
Sunday-Thursday: 6:00 pm (**note new time**)

Public Tours Our next public tour is Wednesday, November 14, at 11:00 AM	Parnas Office Hours Louis Solomon would be delighted to meet with you. Please schedule a visit at parnas@shearithisrael.org .
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SEASON PREMIERE

Friday Night Lights

Next Friday Night, October 19 | 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!

PTTS Shabbaton & Young Couples and Families Luncheon

Shabbat Morning, November 3

Jr. Congregation with a Torah Reading begins at 10:30 am
Luncheon begins after Morning Services
Young families will form meaningful bonds at our inaugural PTTS Shabbaton. Our Hebrew School students will be preparing in class for this big day when they are invited to take center stage in our Junior Congregation on Shabbat morning, with a Young Couples and Families Luncheon to follow.

To register or sponsor the luncheon, go to
shearithisrael.org/ptts-csi-luncheon.

Special Opportunity for CSI Teens

We are looking for a few experienced Junior Congregation participants to mentor some of our PTTS students to help them prepare for this special event. Contact Yona Glass at yglass@shearithisrael.org if you would like to help a PTTS student master their part. This is a rewarding and fun chance to support our PTTS students, and can also be used to fulfill community service hours.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

We welcome the following new members to our growing Shearith Israel family:
Orna Shulman
Adam and Dara Kritzer Towne
(Adam is the son of Madelene and trustee, Stan Towne)

Women's Services This Week

All women and girls welcome

This Shabbat | 9:00 am | Little Synagogue
Featuring Barbara Sasson, who became a Bat Mitzvah

Shearith Israel's women's services are conducted by and for women and are an opportunity for women to lead prayer, read from the Torah, and perform the mitzvot 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.

If you are interested in learning more about our Women's Services, please contact Mrs. Lisa Rohde at lrohde-csi@yahoo.com.

NEW CLASS:

Entering the Land: The Book of Joshua
Rabbi David Silber | Sundays | 10:00 am - 11:30 am
(Tuition is \$275, but FREE for Shearith Israel members)

This class by Drisha Founder and Dean and Covenant Award educator Rabbi David Silber will study the book of Joshua carefully from a literary perspective, exploring core biblical questions: what does it mean to be a disciple, and how can a student turn into a teacher? Can anyone replace Moses? Does Joshua fulfill the Torah's commands about conquest of the land? What can this teach us about war and the possibility of peace?

Rabbi David Silber is the Founder and Dean of Drisha Institute for Jewish Education. He received ordination from the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary. He received the Covenant Award in 2000. He is the author of *A Passover Haggadah: Go Forth and Learn*, published by JPS in 2011, and the newly released *For Such a Time as This: Biblical Reflections in the Book of Esther*, published by Koren Publishing in 2017 (Hebrew).

Free registration at shearithisrael.org/silber.

Youth Team Meet-and-Greet for CSI Parents

with our new Youth Groups Leadership Team,

Nat Bernstein & Daniela Bernstein

Monday, October 22 | 7:00 pm

Hosted by Zoya Raynes & Naftali Friedman

Address will be provided upon RSVP.

Shearith Israel parents, get to know our new youth groups leaders, Nat and Daniela, at this meet-and-greet hosted by Zoya Raynes and Naftali Friedman. We are confident that our youth will benefit from these two energetic, creative, and inspiring role models. Light dairy dessert will be served.

RSVP at shearithisrael.org/meet-and-greet.

A Community Dinner Featuring **Shearith Israel Member and Author, Scott Shay** in Conversation with **Rabbi Meir Soloveichik**

Friday Evening, November 9 | Following Evening Services

Religion can be both inspiring and distressing. And many critiques of it are simultaneously compelling and dubious. In his new book, *In Good Faith: Questioning Religion and Atheism*, Scott Shay examines atheist arguments with a refreshing modern eye in this comprehensive look at our most fundamental questions about faith and reason.

To register, visit shearithisrael.org/scott-shay.

Scott A. Shay has had a successful business career spanning Wall Street, private equity, venture capital, and banking. Throughout his life, he has also been a student of religion and how religion ought to apply to the world outside of the synagogue, church, or mosque, also authoring the best-selling title, *Getting Our Groove Back: How to Energize American Jewry*.

*Note: Books can be ordered from Amazon.com or other vendors—if you have them shipped directly to the Synagogue to arrive **before Thursday, November 8**, Scott will inscribe the book to you prior to Shabbat and give it to you at the dinner.*