

## Jewish Education Alerts

- Rabbi Soloveichik's Tuesday Morning Women's Class is on hiatus **until January 8.**
- The final session of Rabbi Silber's Sunday Class will be this **Sunday, December 23.**
- Rabbi Sjimon den Hollander's Sunday Class will be on hiatus **from December 30-January 13,** returning January 20.
- PTTTS Hebrew School will **not** meet on December 27.
- Toddler Program's final session of the semester is on **Monday, December 24.** Spring Semester starts January 2—register now at [shearithisrael.org/toddlerprogram!](http://shearithisrael.org/toddlerprogram!)

### From Goshen to Gotham City:

#### Keeping Torah Alive in Exile

A Yom Iyun at Lincoln Square Synagogue  
**December 25 | 8:30 am Shahrit | 9:15 Breakfast |  
 9:30 am Keynote Speaker, Nechama Price  
 10:30 am -12:30 pm Breakout Sessions**

This 4-hour interactive event features our *Yoetzet Halakha*, Shiffy Friedman, along with 4 other inspiring Jewish women leaders. Breakfast and coffee will be served. \$5 fee. Register at [lss.org/event/yomiyun2018](http://lss.org/event/yomiyun2018).

## CHOIR SELECTIONS THIS SHABBAT

### Friday Night (12/21)

*V'Shameru* (p. 166) | Leon Kramer

*Psalm 23* (p. 174) | Leon Kramer

### Shabbat Morning (11/22)

*Yehi Hasdekha* (p. 215) | Leon Kramer

*Tehilat* (p. 216) | Leon Hyman

**Leon Kramer** (1866-1941)—Leon Kramer was the choir-master of Shearith Israel from 1886-1941.

**Leon Hyman**—Mr. Hyman has been the choirmaster of Shearith Israel since 1955.

#### Public Tours

Our next public tour is  
**Wednesday,  
 January 9, at 11:00 AM**

#### Parnas Office Hours

Louis Solomon would be delighted to meet with you. Please schedule a visit at [parnas@shearithisrael.org](mailto:parnas@shearithisrael.org).

## DEBAR TORAH: THE TWELVE SIGNS: PROPHECY AND BLESSING COMBINED

— HAZZAN RABBI IRA ROHDE —

In Parashat Vayhee, Jacob seems to combine into one the giving of blessings and the telling of future portents, the two functions of priest and prophet, respectively. In 48:9, Jacob says “*take them [Menashe and Ephraim] unto me that I may bless them,*” and in 48:15 and 20 he is clearly giving a blessing. And yet in v. 21, Jacob seems to be switching somewhat into prophecy, and it's not quite clear whether Jacob is blessing the people that God should return them to the land of their fathers or whether he is predicting that God will return them to the land of their fathers. By 49:1 Jacob is clearly prophesying: “*And Jacob called to his children, saying, gather yourselves and I shall tell you that which shall befall you in the end of the days.*” And yet the prophecy for all of the tribes ends clearly in a blessing for Joseph in v. 24-26, and the end of this whole prophecy seems to refer retroactively to all of the preceding as a blessing, giving this curious explanation in 49:28: “*All these [pertain to] the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father spoke to them and blessed them, each man according to his blessing did he bless them.*”

Rashi (49:28) asks the obvious question: “But aren't there those among them whom he didn't bless but rather vexed [with a chiding or curse]?” The answer would seem to be that prophecy and blessing, as well as cursing, are interwoven functions and not fully distinguishable, as we see most famously in the story of the prophet Balaam. The curious way Menashe and Ephraim are blessed also seems to have to do with Jacob giving a “blessing” which is a true and appropriate prophecy of their future destiny. On his deathbed Jacob is both the patriarch dispensing the blessings of his heritage as well as the blind seer whose eyes bear weighty portents. And if we look carefully, back at Abraham and Isaac, as well as forward to all the prophets thereafter, we see these functions combined and working in tandem.

What can we make of this combination of blessing and prophecy into one? And indeed, what are to make of the individual expressions, likening the tribes to animals, often seeming to curse them or predict a bad end? The key seems to be in this final expression “*each man according to his blessing.*” In the past, in comments on Parashat Vayiggash, I gave a sympathetic Jewish hearing to Joseph the Astrologer's reading of his family constellation. Here I'd also borrow from astrology to explain that there are several different personality types. These personalities define individuals, but they may define more collective entities such as tribes and peoples, as well. These “personality types” and their signs often hold the key to their destiny, and the proper fulfillment of the virtuous potential inherent in their personality often holds the key to their reaching their fullest blessing and happiness. Astrologers traditionally allow for many different types of personalities, with different characteristics and a multitude of different healthy and sick trajectories for each.

We as Jews must be careful not to take an excessively deterministic approach to astrology, but the basic understanding that personality type usually is destiny can be understood. It is notable that the twelve tribes correspond, like the astrological types, to the twelve months of the year and the twelve signs of the zodiac. The animals used may not be the same ones used in other cultures, the typology of the personality may not match up with other astrological systems, but the gist of it may be the same as in other astrological systems. The twelve tribes subdivide into clans, many with their own personalities, without necessarily an astrological reference, but the subdivision by genealogy may compare to subdivision by further astrological signs. I often note that today's synagogues use symbols of the twelve tribes as a reaction in place of the twelve signs of the zodiac which often adorned older Jewish religious structures, but that in fact they may amount to the same thing. In encompassing twelve (or thirteen) tribes, like the Greek amphictyony, there is an encompassing of a universe of personality types and characters, each with his own flagship characters, the development of which leads to its fulfillment in blessing or the frustration of which leads to failure, vexation, and curse. In this universe of personality and character, virtue, vice, blessing, and curse, as well as the successes and failures which character and its types prophetically portend, are indeed combined.



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CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL

*Year of Years Celebration*

CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL

The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

## Shabbat Vayhee

*December 21-22, 2018*

Hertz Pentateuch: p. 180; Haftarah p. 191  
 Kaplan Living Torah: p. 240; Haftarah p. 1090

CANDLE LIGHTING | 4:13 pm

EVENING SERVICES | 4:15 pm

FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS | Rabbi Soloveichik | “When WeWork Doesn't Work” | *2018-2019 season sponsored by the Julis family.*

MORNING SERVICES | Main Sanctuary | 8:15 am

*Conclusion of Sefer Bereshit:* When the Reader reaches the final verse of Parashat Vayhee, the congregation stands and immediately says:

חֲזַק וְנִתְחַזַּק—חֲזַקוּ וַיֵּאֱמָץ לְבַבְכֶּם כָּל הַמִּיחֲלִים לָהּ

*Be strong and let us be strengthened — Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all ye that hope for the LORD.*

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

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

JUNIOR CONGREGATION | 10:30 am | Little Synagogue

TALK | Rabbi Soloveichik

KIDDUSH | Levy Auditorium | *Sponsored by the Neumark family, in memory of Debby Neumark.*

SHABBAT AFTERNOON SHIUR WILL RETURN NEXT WEEK.

EVENING SERVICES | 4:05 pm

HABDALA | 4:58 pm

### Weekday Service Times

#### Mornings:

Sunday & Tuesday: 8:00 am | Monday, Wednesday-Friday: 7:15 am

#### Evenings (Arbit only):

Sunday-Thursday: 6:30 pm

*Note: Our offices will be closed on December 25th.*

EARLY BIRD PRICING UNTIL: TUESDAY, JANUARY 1

## Shabbat Shira Sing-Along Luncheon

*Featuring our talented musical triumvirate:*

*Hazzan Rabbi Ira Rohde, Associate Hazzan Rev. Philip L. Sherman, and Shamash, Zachary Edinger*

Shabbat, January 19 | Following Morning Services

Have you ever wished you were more familiar with Shearith Israel's unique liturgy and melodies? Do you ever have the urge to sing along with the Shearith Israel choir (or belt it out at your own home)? At this special Shabbat luncheon, join the uplifting voices of our clergy in discussing, learning, and singing classic Shearith Israel tunes in a laid-back, cozy atmosphere.

All ages are sure to enjoy what will undoubtedly be a chart-topping hit.

Register or sponsor at [shearithisrael.org/sing-along-luncheon](http://shearithisrael.org/sing-along-luncheon).

*This event is one of our many Year of Years, 365th Anniversary events, showcasing and transmitting the unique musical traditions of our congregation.*



## Winter Coat Drive

Now Through December 31

Donate gently used coats for men, women, and children, to keep those in need warm this winter season. We will get them to *New York Cares*.

Drop off in the bin outside Levy Auditorium through December 31. (Tax receipts available upon request.)



## COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

*Mazal Tob* to Becky & Eitan Kimelman on the birth of a baby girl.

*Mazal Tob* to Dr. Craig Moskowitz and Monica Friedman on the birth of a baby boy, Henry Blake (Chaim Baruch).

*Mazal Tob* to Linda & Dr. Morris Shamah on the birth of a great-grandson, Shlomo Yair Singer, in Israel.

## Remembering Baghdad Continued: Two Upcoming Film Screenings

Wednesday, January 9 | 7:00 pm

### Letters From Baghdad

*Produced by Shearith Israel trustee, David Dangoor*

This film tells the story of Gertrude Bell, who left the confines of England to seek freedom and independence in the Arabian desert and became the most powerful woman of her day in the British Empire. The film explores the choices that trailblazing women make, and how decisions made by Bell continue to influence current events in the Middle East and the world today.

Wednesday, February 6 | 7:00 pm

### The Last Jews of Baghdad

Marking the anniversary of the Baghdad Hangings

*With opening remarks from producer Carole Basri*

Today, only 5 Jews remain in Iraq from a population of 160,000. This film asks, "Why did the Iraqi Jews leave?" The answer is found in the discriminatory laws and policies enacted by Iraq's government and leaders against these former members of Iraqi society who still consider themselves "Iraqi Jews."

Register for both films at [shearithisrael.org/baghdad-screenings](http://shearithisrael.org/baghdad-screenings).



*This series is part of our many Year of Years, 365th Anniversary events, showcasing the extraordinary diversity and heritage of our congregation.*

## Pre-Pay Your 2019-2020 Dues

Through December 31

As we approach the end of 2018, and back by popular demand, we are again offering you another way to help the synagogue while potentially improving your own 2018 tax position.

Full, associate, and young members may pre-pay 2019-2020 dues at our current rates. If we receive your payment by December 31, 2018, you will be exempt from any dues increase that may be implemented in the upcoming year.

To pre-pay, go to [shearithisrael.org/prepay2019](http://shearithisrael.org/prepay2019).

## Mitzvot Workshops with Shamash, Z. Edinger

For Children Aged 5-12

Select Sunday Mornings at 10:00 am

THIS Sunday, December 23 | Sunday, March 3 | Sunday, April 14

These Mitzvot Workshops are a wonderful opportunity for our elementary school age youth - both boys and girls - to learn to sing the melodies of selected prayers from the Shabbat and holiday services as well as learn about the parts of the Torah service, and receive training in the hands-on parts of the service.

Sign up for December 23 (it's FREE!) at [shearithisrael.org/mitzvot-workshop](http://shearithisrael.org/mitzvot-workshop).

## Parent-Child Learning & Pizza

On Upcoming Saturday Nights:

January 12 | 6:45 pm—Led by Rabbi Ira Rohde

February 9 | 7:00 pm—Led by Z. Edinger

For Children Aged 5-12 & Their Parents or Grandparents

This new initiative gives parents (or grandparents) the opportunity to study Torah with their children together with Shearith Israel's clergy. Pizza and prizes help make this a fun-filled evening of inter-generational learning.

Register for the January 12 session (only \$5 per person) at [shearithisrael.org/parent-child-learning](http://shearithisrael.org/parent-child-learning).

## PTTS Shabbaton 2.0

Shabbat, January 19

After the success of our first PTTS Shabbaton, we're happy to announce our second Shabbat morning where PTTS students are invited to take the lead in our Junior Congregation. And feel free to stick around by signing up for our Shabbat Shira Sing-Along Luncheon!

## Calling CSI Teens

Like last time, 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. This is a rewarding and fun chance to support our PTTS students, and can also be used to fulfill community service hours.

Contact Yona Glass at [yglass@shearithisrael.org](mailto:yglass@shearithisrael.org) if you would like to help a PTTS student master their part.