

THIS WEEK—YOM HAZIKARON

The Meaning of Memory:

Reflections on Leading a Worthy Life

A Conversation Between Rabbi Soloveichik & Leon Kass

THIS Tuesday, April 17

8:00 pm

Join us for a special Yom HaZikaron event, featuring a conversation between Rabbi Meir Soloveichik and Dr. Leon Kass,

author of *Leading a Worthy Life: Finding Meaning in Modern Times*.

The event is free, but registration is encouraged at shearithisrael.org/kass-event.

In partnership with YU's Straus Center and American Enterprise Institute Council

Civil War Memorial Event Honoring Myer Asch Beth Olam, Shearith Israel Cemetery, 2 Cypress Hills Street Next Sunday, April 22 | 11:00 am

Please join us for a very special event on the morning of April 22nd when we will honor Colonel Myer Asch, a highly decorated veteran of the Civil War, by installing a special marker of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) Meade Post 1 at his grave. The ceremony will include a color guard, Civil War reenactors, special presentations, and a tour of the cemetery, decorating the graves of veterans of the Civil War buried at Beth Olam. The cemetery is located at the intersection of Cypress Hills Street and the Jackie Robinson Parkway. Please join us for this very special event.

Registration is encouraged at shearithisrael.org/myer-asch. Round-trip transportation from the synagogue is available for \$18 per person, subject to availability.

For more information, please contact Zachary Edinger at zedinger@shearithisrael.org.

Meet with Our Parnas

Louis Solomon would be delighted to meet with you. Please schedule a visit by email: parnas@shearithisrael.org.

DEBAR TORAH: PRIESTLY INSTRUCTIONS

— HAZZAN RABBI IRA ROHDE —

The story line in the Book of Leviticus is hard to follow: First, in our *parasha*, the seven-day anointing and inauguration of Aaron and his sons as priests culminates in an eighth-day public Priestly Blessing and sacrifice in, which the “Glory of the Lord” is revealed in a Fire from Before God which consumes the sacrifices on the Altar. Then Nadab and Abihu, apparently swept up in the enthusiasm, offer “strange fire” and die. Then Moses instructs Aaron and his remaining sons, Elazar and Ithamar, that they cannot interrupt their duties to mourn, but instead must carry on with their priestly functions. With the exception that Aaron doesn’t eat of the sin-offering, the priests comply, letting their Levite kinsmen take care of the dead. Moses reminds Aaron and his sons not to observe any outward signs of mourning. For good measure, Moses also adds that when performing their priestly duties in the Sanctuary, they must avoid alcoholic beverages. Then the story line seems interrupted by a section of laws about pure and impure animals, and next week’s *parasha* has an interruption about the laws of “metzora” or Biblical “leprosy,” picking up the story line “after the death of Aaron’s two sons” two *parashiyot* later. What’s the basis of these interruptions?

It struck me that the key verses are the two right after the warning not to drink alcohol: “And that ye may make a distinction between the holy and the unholy, and between the unclean and the clean; And that ye may instruct the Children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord has spoken to them by the hand of Moses” (Lev. 10:10-11). The laws of consuming or having contact with impure dead animals and the following laws of leprosy mark the beginning of this priestly “instruction,” which later continues with some amount of civil laws to ensure the moral purity of society. These were the laws in which Aaron and the priests were supposed to give instruction: the ones which taught the children of Israel how to distinguish and separate the pure from the contaminated and sinful. Of course, all of the Torah’s laws were taught by Moses, using Aaron as his mouthpiece. But the laws which ensure purity had to be taken on by Aaron and the priests as their special domain to instruct the people forever, in all subsequent generations. Why? How are these domains of law different from the rest of the Torah?

Granted that these laws do overlap with other areas of the Torah’s legislation, one answer which can be ventured is that whereas many of the Torah’s laws can be ruled upon by civil authorities, i.e., judges and other magistrates, here we are defining the jurisdiction of the priests. A civil judge would have little authority to rule on matters of ritual permissibility or purity. A priest might have some jurisdiction on matters of civil law insofar as is necessary to ensure the purity of society, which might be interpreted rather broadly. This is why Leviticus in its later chapters contains much civil law. But a civil authority’s jurisdiction is different. The verbs associated with judges and officers is to judge, “punish,” and enforce. Priests are called upon to “show” or instruct. Civil law is basically considered knowable and available to the people. All that’s required is the judging of cases and enforcement. Purity and impurity, however, is much more subtle. That’s why priests on duty must not drink. (Priests’ vision is obscured by drink; by contrast, judges’ vision is obscured by bribes). It’s necessary to show, instruct, and declare what is impure, and actively separate it from the pure. In a civil case, the offender or plaintiff’s guilt or innocence is an objective fact, and all the court is doing is trying to discover this: the decision should be a verification of objective facts. In some laws of impurity, on the other hand, although based upon objective facts, it is the declaration of impurity which itself actually ontologically creates the impurity. Discovering the objective situation is not as pressing as the need for constant practical direction in showing and giving detailed instructions as how to proceed. Of course, political leaders also offer detailed instructions. But society will always require new generations of priests and holy men to direct them and give them instructions as to how to avoid contamination by the shadowy realm of impurity.



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL

The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Shabbat Shemini-Mahar Hodesh

April 13-14, 2018

Hertz Pentateuch: p. 443; Haftarah: p. 948
Kaplan Living Torah: p. 536; Haftarah: p. 1262

CANDLE LIGHTING | 7:15 pm

MINHAH & ARBIT | 6:30 pm | Main Sanctuary

FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS | Rabbi Meir Soloveichik | “Forbes Magazine Finds Shabbat” | 2017-2018 season sponsored by the Julis family.

ZEMIROT | 8:15 am | Main Sanctuary

SHAHARIT (NISHMAT) | 9:00 am | Main Sanctuary

TOT SHABBAT WITH LIZ AND SHANADE | Ages 0-4 | 10:00 am
| Fidanque Youth Room

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

JUNIOR CONGREGATION | Ages 5-12 | 10:30 | Little Synagogue

LECTURE | Rabbi Meir Soloveichik | “Is God in the Israeli Declaration of Independence? A Tale of May 14, 1948”

First in a Three-Part Series on *Israel At 70*

KIDDUSH | Levy Auditorium

SHABBAT AFTERNOON PIRKEI ABOT SHIUR | Rabbi Meir Soloveichik
| 6:10 pm | “Pirkei Abot: A New Introduction” | Levy Auditorium

MINHAH & ARBIT | 7:10 pm

HABDALAH | 8:12 pm

Rosh Hodesh Iyyar begins Saturday night.

Weekday Service Times

Mornings:

Sunday: 8:00 am

Monday-Friday: 7:15 am

Evenings:

Sunday-Thursday (Minhah & Arbit): 6:30 pm

Yom HaAtzmaut begins on Wednesday night. On Thursday, Hallel will be recited.

Central Park West at 70th Street, New York City • www.shearithisrael.org

NEXT SHABBAT
Visiting Scholar
Professor Laura Arnold Leibman

is returning to Shearith Israel to deliver two historical lectures

NEXT Shabbat, April 21 | Following Morning Services
"Jews and Voting in Early America: The Fight for Civil Rights"

Monday, April 30 | 7:00 pm
"Sephardic Country Houses"

For more information and to sponsor the *kiddush* following the Shabbat lecture, visit shearithisrael.org/leibman.

Laura Arnold Leibman is Professor of English and Humanities at Reed College in Portland, Oregon. Her work focuses on religion and the daily lives of women and children in early America, and uses everyday objects to help bring their stories back to life.

Seeking Girls to Recite The Book of Ruth

First rehearsal: Sunday, April 29 at 4 pm.

As they do each year on the first day of Shabuot, Sunday, May 20, the girls of our synagogue will recite the Book of Ruth for the congregation in the Main Sanctuary after services. If your daughter would like to participate, please contact Mrs. Lisa Rohde (lirohde-csi@yahoo.com).

Don't Forget to Count *Sefirat haOmer!*

Shearith Israel has two "Omer Boards" which pre-date the Mill Street Synagogue of 1730. They are used in the synagogue to count the seven weeks between Passover and *Shabuot*. This based on Leviticus 23:15, which instructs us to count 50 days from the offering of the new barley sacrifice on Passover until the holiday of *Shabuot* when the new wheat was offered. The measurement of the offering was called an "Omer," and from this unit of measurement comes the name used for this seven-week period.

The letters H, S, D found on the boards stand for the *Homer* (H is an archaic way of transliterating the Hebrew letter 'ayin), S for *Semana* (weeks), and *Dia* (days). The boards have been used annually for nearly 300 hundred years.



SHEARITH ISRAEL IS A PROUD SPONSOR OF
Spinoza's Universe
An All-Day Conference Beginning at 10:00 am
THIS Thursday, April 19
Baruch College, 55 Lexington Avenue

Few philosophers have elicited as much controversy as Baruch Spinoza, who was banished from the Sephardic community for his heretical views. Panels of distinguished scholars will explore his philosophy in the context of the tumultuous world of the 17th Century Holland, and its continued relevance today.

Keynote address will be given by award-winning historian and author Russell Shorto, on the topic of "Spinoza, the Dutch Landscape, and the Human Mind."

For more information and to register for panels, visit shearithisrael.org/spinoza-baruch.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Hazak U'barukh to Rabbi Meir Soloveichik for being awarded Becket's 2018 Canterbury Medal. Each year Becket honors a person who embodies and lives out an unfailing commitment to religious freedom. Past medalists include esteemed individuals such as Elie Wiesel and Archbishop Charles Chaput. Rabbi Soloveichik will be presented with the medal at the Canterbury Medal Gala at the Pierre Hotel on Thursday, May 24. To attend or sponsor the event, visit becketlaw.org/about-us/canterbury-medal-gala.

Hizki U'berukha to Gail Propp, for being chosen as the honoree at Keren Or's Women's Division Gala Spring Luncheon. The Luncheon will be held at Park East Synagogue on Wednesday, May 2. To attend or sponsor, visit tinyurl.com/gailpropp

Thank you to our member, Ivan Berkowitz, for speaking at our Yom HaShoa screening of 1945, and thank you to volunteers Vivette Ancona and Mrs. Lisa Rohde for their assistance during the event.

Thank you to Hazzan Rabbi Ira Rohde for representing Shearith Israel at this year's Annual Yom HaShoa Reading of the Names.

We welcome the following new members to the Shearith Israel family:

Ruth & Philip Bieler
Aura Bijou-Plotkin
Daniel Weiner

We mourn the loss of our member, Florence Tatistcheff. Condolences to her daughter, Marina, and her entire family.

Communications Alert: Phone System Damage

Our office phone system was recently decimated by a manhole fire nearby. We are currently looking into replacement options, but in the meantime, it is best to email us rather than call the Synagogue. For a complete list of email contact information for our Synagogue staff, visit shearithisrael.org/contact-us.

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: THURSDAY, MAY 31

Shearith Israel Toddler Summer Camp

June 19-August 16 | Tuesdays & Thursdays 9:30-11:30am

1 AND 2 DAY OPTIONS AVAILABLE,

PLUS OUR NEW 50-MINUTE MINI-SESSION OPTION

For ages 16 - 34 months | Caregiver attendance required

Join our wonderfully fun and educational Toddler Summer Camp, held in the new Fidanque Youth Room, with pool time on our Portico. Led by the marvelous Liz Rios.

To learn more and apply, visit shearithisrael.org/toddlerprogram.

THIS SUNDAY

Upper West Side Celebrates Israel

THIS Sunday, April 15 | Symphony Space
(2537 Broadway at 95th Street)

Join Shearith Israel and the entire Upper West Side Jewish community in celebrating Israel's 70th Yom Ha'atzmaut! This massive festival will have both indoor and outdoor activities for all ages. Visit shearithisrael.org/uws-celebrates-israel for more information.

PRESENTED BY THE SISTERHOOD

Jr. Book Group (for children ages 11-14)

First Meeting: NEXT Shabbat, April 21 | 4:30 pm

At a private home near the Synagogue

Led by our member Lina Sion, a former book scout of Middle Grade and Young Adult books

Come join with friends as we discuss this newly released book: *Hunger* by Donna Jo Napoli. Read the book and be ready to share your thoughts, and impressions. And don't forget to come with your own ideas of future books or subjects you would like to talk about!

To RSVP and get location information, email Rose Edinger at rgedinger@gmail.com.