

SHABUOT AT SHEARITH ISRAEL

Pre-Shabuot Mini-Series:
Revealing Ruth with Shira Hecht-Koller
Wednesday, May 29 & Wednesday, June 5 at 11:00 am
Shearith Israel is proud to partner with Drisha to study the book of Ruth with an eye toward literary nuance and character development.
To register, go to drisha.org/ongoing-classes.
To request a Shearith Israel member discount code, visit tinyurl.com/drisha-ruth.

Rabbi Soloveichik’s Shabuot Lecture
Saturday night, June 8 | 11:00 pm
Rabbi Soloveichik’s annual Shabuot lecture has become a go-to destination for the full UWS Shabuot experience.
Come for the Torah, stay for the cheesecake!
For sponsorship opportunities, visit tinyurl.com/shabuot-lecture.

Girls’ Ruth Reading
1st day of Shabuor, Sunday, June 9 | following morning services
Following morning services, the girls of our synagogue (through college age) recite the Book of Ruth for the congregation in the main sanctuary. Don’t miss this beautiful Shearith Israel tradition!

CHOIR SELECTIONS THIS SHABBAT
Friday Night
V’Shameru “#1” (p. 166) | Samuel Naumbourg
Psalms 23 (p. 174) | Leon Kramer
Yigdal “#1” (P. 177) | Samuel de Sola
Shabbat Morning
Misheberakh (p. 208) | Salomone Rossi
Yehi Hasdekha (p. 215) | Leon Hyman
Ubnuho Yomar (p. 218) | Leon Hyman
En Kelohenu (p. 229) | Samuel de Sola
Adon Olam (p. 232) | Salomone Rossi

Public Tours
Our next public tour is
Wednesday, June 12,
at 11:00 AM

Parnas Office Hours
Louis Solomon would be delighted to meet with you. Please schedule a visit at parnas@shearithisrael.org.

OMER AND SHABUOT: THE AGONIZING FINAL COUNTDOWN
— HAZZAN RABBI IRA ROHDE —


The listing of holidays in Leviticus Chapter 23 is much more directly connected with agriculture than similar lists of them elsewhere, as befits a book preoccupied with sacrificial offerings, both animal- and plant-based. Of course, the holiday cycle is everywhere based upon the crop cycle. But the recounting of the cycle in Leviticus 23 is punctuated with more agricultural detail, such as the detail in which the Omer wave-offering is described, the description of the loaves made from the new grain crop on Shabuot, the reminder to leave gleanings in the field when harvesting, and especially the detail of rejoicing with tree branches on Succot.

Most of that detail is focused simply upon the grain crop. I have always found that to be an indicator of the text’s authenticity. It’s hard for us to imagine a time when the vast majority of a society’s caloric intake came from the wheat and barley crop, but archeology of the ancient Levant has borne this out. Some other crops do get mentioned in the Torah (and other ancient crops which were cultivated get little or no mention), but agricultural life is described in starkly simple terms as revolving around grain. I’m always reminded that archeology seems to confirm the Levant (O.K., it’s the northern Levant, northern Syria on the border with Turkey, near Abraham’s Haran) as the most probable origin of wheat and barley, which spread quickly from there to Egypt, Mesopotamia, and even to China. So, as a civilization, we Israelites descend from perhaps the oldest grain-based culture in the world. And we have one of the oldest vernacular literatures, popularized using an accessible alphabetic writing system, which celebrates that basic agricultural grain-cycle: I have always found that striking.

At this point in our year, we are between Israel’s first Omer (a bundle, perhaps 10 or eleven bushels) of grain harvest (presumably barley, as it seems to indicate in such sources as the Book of Ruth, although it doesn’t say so in Lev. 23) and the offering of the first real “bread” (presumably wheat, harvested later according to the Book of Ruth) made from the new crop on Shabuot. But it’s odd: If they had already harvested the Omer of new grain and “waved” it as an offering, how come they didn’t make a bread-offering sooner? Why wait until Shabuot? Verse 14 seems to indicate that Israelites themselves were permitted to eat bread from the new crop any time after the Omer was brought. So why the seven-week wait for an offering of loaves of bread?

One could answer that barley makes a poor bread, lacking gluten to bind loaves, of a poorer taste, perhaps less capable of being stored. And for these reasons and more, the main bread desired was wheat-bread and that was the main crop.

But one could go further and say that any early-harvested grain before Shabuot, no matter whether it was barley or wheat, was not likely to make a good bread, because it wasn’t sufficiently dried-out to be ground well into flour. Nor would it have stored well, which was one of the main advantages to a grain-based food-supply. Our text doesn’t actually say that the Omer was necessarily from barley. So any early-harvested grain was still considered not-fully-ready. I suggest that this is why two particular terms are used in addition to “bread” in v. 14: “*You must not eat any bread, or roasted or new grain, until the very day you bring this offering to your God.*” These two latter terms קלי and כרמל have always fascinated the “foodie” in me: I imagined that because of its poor quality for bread, the “green” grain might have had to have been boiled like German “gruenkern.” Or, alternatively, the green grain would have been “roasted” until the roasting tenderized the kernels and the kernels themselves could be chewed, or else the roasting dried out the grain enough so that an inferior but passable type flour or grits could be made out the roasted grain. Indeed, to this day in many parts of the Middle East, especially among Arabs in Israel and Tunisia, green wheat is roasted and ground into a cereal called “freekeh.” I’m not sure the procedure is the same today, but in ancient times the grain was left on the cut-down stalks, piled up in the field, and if some had to be consumed quickly, some piles of stalks were set on fire. Using the stalks and chaff as fuel, the kernels of wheat would be roasted, separating from the burning stalks in the process. And when the fire went out, the separated kernels (which were heavier and more dense, falling to the bottom of the pile) would be found collected near the ground underneath the ashes. The more fully-roasted kernels could be eaten as is, or dipped in vinegar as Boaz’ workmen did. And the less-fully roasted could be pounded or ground into “freekeh” and cooked or baked with. But for most of the grain crop, there had to be this agonizing wait at the end, until the crop would be fully ready for optimal use, as well as optimal storage. It was this agonizing wait at the very end the final countdown and test of the farmer’s patience, which is what our Omer period is about.



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CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL
Year of Years Celebration

CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL
The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Shabbat Emor
May 17-18, 2019

Hertz Pentateuch: p. 513; Haftarah p. 528
Kaplan Living Torah: p. 610; Haftarah p. 1172

CANDLE LIGHTING | 7:50 pm
EVENING SERVICES | 6:45 pm

MORNING SERVICES | Main Sanctuary | 8:15 am
TOT SHABBAT | Ages 0-4 | 10:00 am | Fidanque Youth Room
YOUTH GROUPS | Ages 5-12 | 10:00 am | Portico
JUNIOR CONGREGATION | 10:30 am | Little Synagogue
SHIUR | Rabbi Soloveichik | “The Cave of Socrates and Shimon Bar Yochai”
KIDDUSH | Levy Auditorium | *Sponsored by Jennifer Ash and Seth Haberman in honor of Isaac Haberman’s upcoming marriage to Rachel McCoy.*

SHABBAT AFTERNOON PIRKEI ABOT SHIUR | Rabbi Soloveichik
| 6:45 PM | “The Mysterious Talmidim of Rabbi Akiba” | Levy Auditorium
EVENING SERVICES | 7:45 pm
HABDALA | 8:49 pm

Lag La’Omer begins on Wednesday evening.

Weekday Service Times
Mornings:
Sunday: 8:00 am | Monday-Friday: 7:15 am
Evenings:
Sunday-Thursday (Minha & Arbit): 6:30 pm

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

THIS SUNDAY

Chatham Square Cemetery Memorial Event *Honoring the patriotic service rendered by our members*

THIS Sunday, May 19 | 10:30 am

Chatham Square Cemetery | 55 St James Place

Please join us for our annual Memorial Service to honor members of our congregation and to decorate the graves of 19 veterans of the American Revolution. This year's ceremony includes special presentations by **Colonel Jonathan de Sola Mendes**, USMC, Retired, and by **Lieutenant Arthur Goldberg**, USN, Retired. This truly special ceremony features the participation of a color guard and field music and is both enjoyable and moving.

To sign up for transportation (space permitting), contact Z. Edinger at zedinger@shearithisrael.org.



This program is one of our many Year of Years, 365th Anniversary events, showcasing the extraordinary historical roots and uniquely American history of our congregation and community.

Menachem Begin:

Lessons from a Rich Legacy of Leadership

with Rabbi Meir Soloveichik & Senator Joseph Lieberman

THIS Sunday, May 19 | 7:00 pm

Join Rabbi Dr. Meir Soloveichik and Senator Joseph Lieberman as they analyze Menachem Begin's philosophy, actions, and lessons they hold for us today.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

IMPORTANT: Website Update: *Our website is back up, but is not yet up to date; the prayer services schedule is NOT yet available. We are working to restore all functionality as quickly as possible. If you cannot find what you need on the website, you can refer back to our weekly emails for service times, and use the links provided here or in our emails to register for programs.*

We welcome new member **Merry Winslow** to our growing Shearith Israel family.

Condolences to **Chaim Edelstein**, on the passing of his sister, Sarah Friedel.

The Media and Religion: Trends and Challenges

THIS Wednesday, May 22 | 7:00 pm

A panel discussion moderated by Rabbi Meir Soloveichik, with:

- **Emma Green**, Writer, Editor, The Atlantic
- **Terry Mattingly**, Senior Fellow for Media and Religion, The King's College
- **John Podhoretz**, Writer, Editor, Commentary Magazine
- **Sohrab Amari**, Op-ed Editor, New York Post; Contributing Ed., Catholic Herald

This event is free but registration is required at religiousfreedomconf.org.

To sponsor, visit tinyurl.com/media-religion.

Cosponsored by the Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought, the International Center for Law and Religion Studies of Brigham Young University, and the J. Reuben Clark Law Society

DON'T LET YOUR GRADUATE GO UNNOTICED!

2019 Graduate Scroll of Honor & Graduation Kiddush

Shabbat, June 15 | Following Morning Services

Let's spread the good news and celebrate the success and accomplishments of all our graduates from pre-school to PhDs! Visit tinyurl.com/gradkiddush19 by **June 13** to ensure that we can properly list and congratulate your graduate(s) in our **2019 Scroll of Honor**. Even if you cannot attend, please send us listing information for your graduates, and consider co-sponsoring our graduation kiddush for \$180 or just \$36.

Young Couples and Families Year-End

"Celebrate Israel" Picnic

Shabbat, June 1 | Following Morning Services

Featured Speaker: Hai Piasezky

Chaired by Zoya Raynes and Rivka Wiznia

School is ending and the Celebrate Israel Parade is coming! Join our young families the Shabbat before the parade to celebrate Israel with this Israeli-themed luncheon. Our third **PTTS Shabbaton** will be happening this same Shabbat, so don't pass up this chance to mingle!

Hai Piasezky, originally from Moshav Gea, is now living in Manhattan serving as a Senior Community *Shaliach* (emissary) for the UWS on behalf of the Jewish Agency for Israel and the UJA Federation. In his capacity as *Shaliach*, Hai works with more than 25 different organizations, building communal connections to Israel.

For registration and sponsorships, visit tinyurl.com/israel-picnic.

VERY FEW SPOTS REMAINING!

Day Trip to Touro with Rabbi Soloveichik

July 4 | Departing at 7:00 am

Spaces currently available to "1776" and "365" sponsors only

If any spots remain, we may open registration more broadly

Join Rabbi Soloveichik for an all-day field trip to Newport, Rhode Island, home of our historic sister synagogue, the Touro Synagogue.

Highlights of this full-day excursion will include:

- preparatory talks on the bus by Rabbi Soloveichik
- walking tour of Jewish Newport, led by Rabbi Soloveichik
- costumed reading of the Declaration of Independence from the balcony of the Old Colony House as they did in 1776
- memorial service (*hashcabah*) at the cemetery, led by Rabbi Soloveichik
- light lunch and dinner, hosted by Congregation Jeshuat Israel
- major historical lecture delivered by Rabbi Soloveichik, at the Touro Synagogue

If you wish to join as a sponsor, register at tinyurl.com/touro-trip.

PTTS Shabbaton

Shabbat, June 1

Don't miss the final PTTS Shabbaton of the school year! While students are welcome and encouraged to attend services every week, you definitely don't want to lose this chance to take center stage in Junior Congregation and showcase how far you've come since the beginning of the year. Followed by the **Young Families Year-End Picnic** (see center panel). We look forward to celebrating all our PTTS students' accomplishments together!

Register now for PTTS Hebrew School 2019-2020

Held on Thursdays afternoons, with special programming on select Sundays

Early bird pricing until May 31 | School begins: October 24
Polonies Talmud Torah School, provides children and teens with

a substantive Jewish education in a positive and engaging environment. For questions, contact Barbara Reiss at

breiss@shearithisrael.org.

Register at tinyurl.com/hebrewschool19.