

For the Sake of the Commonwealth, Do Good & Not Evil

15 [See, I have set before you today life and goodness, as well as death and evil. 16For I am commanding you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, statutes, and ordinances, so that you may live and increase, and the LORD your God may bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. 17But if your heart turns away and you do not listen, but are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, 18I declare to you today that you will surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess. 19I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore choose life, so that you and your descendants may live, 20and that you may love the LORD your God, obey Him, and hold fast to Him. For He is your life, and He will prolong your life in the land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Deut. 30:15-20).

Why be good and do good? Perhaps, one could say, we should do good for its own sake. After all, doing good is oftentimes not rewarded. Not only is good often not rewarded, but further, the good face tribulations and punishment, while evildoers seem to be rewarded and flourish. In that regard, though, Deuteronomy's emphasis upon goodness being rewarded and evil-doing punished seems disturbing to us. And it is an emphasis which is repeated time and time again from the beginning to the very end of the book. We quote this view of good and evil in our holiest liturgy, including our twice-daily "Shema," and it's particularly prominent here in the blessings and curses section. It's a disturbing concept to take literally as applied to us individually, as it seems to be here in the section warning, "Lest there be any man among you."

But the best interpretation and reconciliation of this view I can come up with is that the Bible is always speaking of good and evil for the collective society. Indeed, the very term "evil" in Verse 15 above can be translated as "disaster." "Disaster" is a term we usually take to mean something affecting a group as a whole, not just an individual. As I've noted many times before, the Bible's focus is upon society as a whole, not upon individuals. And there is a great focus upon political society and political leadership. The individual's "goodness" or "badness" is judged through the good or harm done to the collective society, even when the text speaks about the individual. The individual is expected to see his individual goodness or wickedness in terms of how it affects his society, and to behave accordingly, subordinating his personal good to that of his society. He is expected never to say "I [personally] will be safe, even though I follow my own willful heart (29:18)." Similarly, Plato thought of good and evil in the individual as essentially connected to the good of the city-state or republic. One should do good for the good of one's own society. That should be a powerful motivating factor in doing good. Although ultimately it doesn't take away the problem of evil, and there are plenty of whole societies which experience disaster and evil for no good reason, this approach balances and averages out the good and evil done by its individual members. Rewards are greatest when they are earned in concert with a society of men, and societies of men have the wherewithal to stop evil and curb disasters. No man is an island: Man's good and evil is best judged in terms of the good and evil he does with his society.



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL
The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Shabbat Nitsabim

September 23-24, 2022 | 28 Elul, 5782

SHABBAT SCHEDULE

Consecration Anniversary of Nineteenth St. Synagogue Building (1860)

Hertz: p. 878 | Haftarah: p. 883

Kaplan: p. 1010 | Haftarah: p. 1242

Candle Lighting | 6:33 pm

Friday Evening Services | 6:30 pm | Main Sanctuary

Zemirot | 8:15 am

Shahrit | 9:00 am | Main Sanctuary

Youth Program | 10:00 am | Led by Gabi & Raph | Fidanque Youth Room

Kiddush | following services | Paved Paradise

Young Families Welcome Back Potluck Picnic | following kiddush | with Gabi & Raph | Paved Paradise

Shabbat Afternoon Class | 5:40 pm | Rabbi Soloveichik

Evening Services | 6:25 pm | Main Sanctuary

Habdala | 7:24 pm

Our choir has returned for the year!

We look forward to celebrating the upcoming holidays with them.

Weekday Service Times

Thurs-Fri, Sept. 29 & 30

Thursday & Friday Mornings: 7:05 am

Thursday Evening Minha, Arbit & Selihot: 6:15 pm

See inside for the full Rosh HaShana & Fast of Gedalia schedules.

HIGH HOLIDAYS

Shabbat Teshuba Derasha

Rabbi Meir Soloveichik

Shabbat, October 1 | Following Morning Services
In the Main Sanctuary

Sponsorship opportunities are available at
shearthisrael.org/events/shabbat-teshuba5783.

Place Your Lulab & Etrog Orders

Deadline: October 2

Purchase your lulab & etrog set through the synagogue at shearthisrael.org/lulab.

COMING UP

Sisterhood Succah Decoration

Thursday, October 6 | 3:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Friday, October 7 | 8:00 am – 12:00 pm

Sunday, October 9 | 9:00 am – 1:00 pm

This year, we plan to build a beautiful succah in our Elias Room. As always, this succah will be decorated lavishly and lovingly by the Shearith Israel Sisterhood. Teens and adults, women and men, are invited to help decorate in preparation for the Succot Festival. To participate in this fun mitzvah, contact Aimee Margolis and Mrs. Lisa Rohde at lrohde.csi@gmail.com.

We also plan to have our Paved Paradise succah again this year, with young families and children aged 5-12 are especially welcome to decorate it! To help decorate this succah, contact csiyoung@shearthisrael.org.

Meals in the Succah

Registered guests may enjoy their own meals in our Paved Paradise succah. You bring the food; we supply disposables, grape juice, and basic beverages.

Request a spot at shearthisrael.org/events/meals-succah-5783.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mazal tob to **Benson & Florie Jerusalmi**, upon the marriage of their son, Jack, to Molly Leifer of Englewood, NJ.

ROSH HASHANA SCHEDULE – SEPTEMBER 25-27

EVE OF ROSH HASHANA – Sun. Sept. 25

Preparations: Morning Selihot: 7:15 am | Shahrit: 8:05 am

Evening Services (Minha & Arbit): 6:15 pm | Main Sanctuary
Candle Lighting: 6:30 pm

DAY 1 ROSH HASHANA – Mon. Sept. 26

Main Sanctuary:

Zemirot: 8:00 am | Shahrit: 8:45 am

‘Et Sha`arei Ratzon & Shofar Service: 10:30 am

Musaf: 11:15 am

Rabbi Soloveichik’s Sermon: following Musaf

Outdoor Service:

Shahrit: 9:15 am

‘Et Sha`arei Ratzon & Shofar Service: 10:40 am

Musaf: 11:00 am

Public Outdoor Shofar Blowing Service for the community:

6:05 pm (10 minutes before Evening Services) | Paved Paradise

Evening Services (Minha & Arbit): 6:15 pm | Main Sanctuary

Candle Lighting: after 7:08 pm

DAY 2 ROSH HASHANA – Tues. Sept. 27

Main Sanctuary:

Zemirot: 8:00 am | Shahrit: 8:45 am

‘Et Sha`arei Ratzon & Shofar Service: 10:20 am

Musaf: 11:00 am

Outdoor Service

Shahrit: 9:15 am

‘Et Sha`arei Ratzon & Shofar Service: 10:30 am

Musaf: 10:50 am

Rabbi Soloveichik’s Sermon: following Musaf

Public Outdoor Shofar Blowing Service for the community:

6:05 pm (10 minutes before Evening Services) | Paved Paradise

Minha, Arbit & Selihot: 6:15 pm | Main Sanctuary

Habdala: 7:06 pm

Fast of Gedaliah – Wed. Sept. 28

Fast Begins (Dawn): 5:38 am

Shahrit: 7:05 am

Minha (with tefillin), Arbit & Selihot: 6:15 pm

End of Fast: 7:05 pm