

Members of God's Royal Family: An Intimate and Elevated Connection

The Name Changes of Abram to Abraham and Sarai to Sarah, the accompanying Covenant of Circumcision, and the subsequent promise of a child to Sarah have often baffled me. Or perhaps I should explain: Within the Parashah of Lekh-Lekha, there seem to be several promises of both Land in Canaan as well as progeny which would multiply into a great populace or nation, in 12:1-3, then again in 13:14-17, also in 15:1-8, summarized in 15:18. The promise in Chapter 17 is longer and grander, but why is it necessary? What makes it different, and how does it change things? After all, by Chapter 15 already, the promise to Abram has already been elevated to the level of a "Covenant," (Heb. "ברית"), a special "deal" or agreement, and this deal has already been symbolically been "cut" and sealed by the offering of animals, cutting them in half, and by God, symbolized by a flame of fire and furnace of smoke, passing between the pieces along with Abram. But if this agreement has already been sealed by this earlier "covenant" ceremony, what is the point of the Name Change and Circumcision Covenant?

The best answer I come up with is two-pronged: The name-change and circumcision covenant bespeak a connection between Abram and God which is at the same time more intimate as well as even more noble. Circumcision obviously denotes the highest level of trust and intimacy. A man only lets another man he trusts and loves touch him at his most vulnerable spot. Our word "testicle" is related to "testimony" and the connection derives from a Classical usage of a man's holding the testicles of his fellow when swearing. Doing so was an ancient sign of trust, truthfulness, fealty, and loyalty. We see a trace of this usage a little further on in the swearing of Eliezer to Abraham. In agreeing to a covenant cut and stamped upon man's most vulnerable member, Abraham and his descendants symbolize their ultimate trust in God, and a deep level of loyalty and fealty. At the same time, there is this elevating and ennobling aspect. I could speculate that perhaps circumcision itself was anciently performed mostly for the nobility and higher classes, and that by requiring circumcision for Abraham's entire household, God is elevating the entire household to nobility.

In addition, though, the name change also elevates and ennobles, in this case beyond nobility, to the level of royalty. My interpretation is that it is as if Abram is now being adopted as Honorary Member of God's Royal Family, so to speak. Being adopted as a Member of a Royal Family asserts a more intimate connection to the Monarch as well as signifying a further ennobling elevation. And a Proper Prince must have a legitimate Heir through a Proper Princess. Perhaps Abram had already been knighted as a noble or human king through the previous Covenant Between the Pieces, but with the status of God's Royal Family, Abraham's heir must come from a recognized Princess, not through a maidservant, to guarantee universal recognition of the Royal Heir. Part of the essence of true royalty is its dynastic aspirations; royalty aims to stabilize a polity by keeping political leadership within a family. Continuity in leading and weathering the storms of leadership can then be taught and inculcated by breeding, training, and careful preparation. The etiquette for an ideal Royal Family shows a mixture of distancing elevation and ennobling as well as intimacy. Often this combination leads to intimate sacrificial pain, which must be borne nobly, as when Abraham must accede to the exile of Ishmael, who is not a fit heir for a Royal.

But the connection which Abraham's descendant, the Nation of Israel, will ultimately have with God will remain this most intimate and elevating. Israel is encumbered with many Royal Duties and obligations, and Israel's intimacy with their Monarch will cause pain which will strike in the most vulnerable areas. God is Israel's Father; God's Name is called upon Israel. God at times lavishes special Favor upon His People Israel, and Israel can then beg specially for that Favor through this intimate Family connection to God Himself.



Shabbat Lekh-Lekha

November 4-5, 2022 | 11 Marbeshvan 5783

SHABBAT SCHEDULE

Hertz: p. 45 | Haftarah: p. 60

Kaplan: p. 52 | Haftarah: p. 1058

Candle Lighting | 5:31 pm

Friday Evening Services | 5:30 pm | Main Sanctuary

Friday Night Lights | following services | *This session sponsored by Faith Fogelman, in memory of her father, Theodore Watkin | 2022-2023 Season of Friday Night Lights is sponsored by the Julis-Rabinowitz family*

Zemirot | 8:15 am / **Shahrit** | 9:00 am | Main Sanctuary

Youth Program | 10:00 am | Fidanque Youth Room

Kiddush Luncheon | following services | Paved Paradise | *Sponsored by the Haberman and Herlands/Smith-Herz families, in memory of Barbara & Myron Smith and James O. Herlands, and Simon & Eva Haberman*

Shabbat Afternoon Class | 4:35 pm

Evening Services | 5:20 pm | Main Sanctuary

Habdala | 6:17 pm

Remember to turn your clocks back an hour on Saturday night.

Weekday Service Times

Mornings:

Sunday: 8:05 am | Monday-Friday: 7:05 am

Evenings:

Sunday-Thursday: **4:30 pm (note earlier time)**

The clock change means an extra hour of sleep - and a harder time making a minyan. If you can help out and attend minyan, morning or evening, please contact Z. Edinger.

THIS SUNDAY

The Sisterhood invites the entire community to a Sunday Matinee

ARRIVALS: A Sephardi-Ashkenazi Love Story

Sunday, November 6 | 3 pm | Discount: \$36 per ticket! (Regular: \$50)

Performed at the Center for Jewish History, 15 W 16th St.

The Sisterhood invites the whole community to join us for the NY premiere of this new off-Broadway show, telling a Romeo and Juliet style tale of how a Sephardic Jew from Turkey met an Ashkenazi Jew from Russia in Seattle, WA. The show is appropriate for adults, teens, and tweens.

Use code "GroupSHI" at tinyurl.com/ArrivalsPlay to get your discount.

COMING UP

Sunday Matinee with Sisterhood is back!

First Film Discussion: November 13

Films provided in advance to registrants

Discussion on Zoom with filmmaker & actor Emanuel Cohn on Nov. 13

This season we are presenting our own mini Israeli film festival.

We are offering three Israeli films, one each in November, December, and January, each to be viewed at your leisure. Then we will come together on Zoom to discuss the featured film with our host, **Emanuel Cohn**, a prominent Israeli film lecturer, actor, and screenwriter. The discussion will include peeks behind the scenes and in-depth conversation as we explore the relationship between history, culture, and identity in each film.

Registration and details at shearithisrael.org/events/sisterhood-film-fest.

Each film: \$10.00 | All three: \$18.00

A link will be sent to you to watch the film, a week before the appointed date, together with a second link to join the Sunday discussion on Zoom.

A Community Shabbat Dinner:

Rabbi Soloveichik in conversation with Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem, Fleur Hassan-Nahoum

Friday, December 2 | Following Evening Services & Friday Night Lights

We're honored to host Fleur Hassan-Nahoum, the current Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem, who hails originally from Gibraltar and is of Spanish & Portuguese descent. Ms. Hassan-Nahoum's political responsibilities include foreign relations, international economic development, and tourism, and she is known for her candor and strong presence. We look forward to what promises to be a lively and provocative conversation.

Registration coming soon!

THANKSGIVING AT SHEARITH ISRAEL

8th Annual Thanksgiving Pack-A-Thon

Thursday, November 24 | 9:00 am | Paved Paradise

Sign up and donate at shearithisrael.org/packathon2022

The tradition continues!

Following Rabbi Soloveichik's special Thanksgiving address, registered volunteers will pack food to be distributed to hungry New Yorkers. In between parade viewing, our youngest volunteers will have their own craft activity in support of the Pack-A-Thon.

Again this year, thanks to an anonymous donor, all contributions (up to \$10,000) will be matched. Together, we can exceed our goal of \$18,000!

Thank you to our local faith community partners: **The Jewish Center, Church of Latter-day Saints, and West End Collegiate Church.**

Calling All Captains!

We need several organized, can-do volunteers to serve as Captains at this logistically ambitious event! For inquiries or to volunteer, please contact SM Rosenberg at rosenberg@shearithisrael.org.

Thanksgiving Parade Viewing for Youth

Thursday, November 24 | 9:00 am

Our Portico provides one of the best Thanksgiving Parade views in the city. But it's not that big. In order to avoid crowding, parade viewing is for children. In an effort to ensure an orderly, secure, and enjoyable experience for our kids, we ask that you **pre-register** at shearithisrael.org/parade2022.

Registration:

Shearith Israel Member children | Free

Non-Member children | \$25 in advance (\$36 at the door subject to availability)

*Additionally, **Pack-A-Thon donors** at the \$180 level and above can register up to 2 children for free, and donors at \$360 and above can register up to 4.*

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Welcome new member **Warren Stern** to our growing Shearith Israel family.

Mazal tob to **Denise Cohen** on her recent marriage to Daniel Schneider. Congratulations to Denise's mother, **Yvonne Cohen**, sister, **Yvette Pomerantz**, and the entire Cohen family.

Condolences to **Zalman Jacobs**, upon the passing of his mother, Golda.

Please Note:

This Sunday's **NYC Marathon** will cause heightened security and street closures. Plan your commute to the synagogue accordingly. Good luck to all our runners!