

## The Unfit Heir: He Who Would Sell the Throne Short

That the tradition considers the Genesis stories of Isaac and Jacob part of the “succession struggles” of the Abrahamic royal family is amply shown by the choice of last week’s Haftarah, clearly comparing the succession of Solomon as “rightful” heir to David to the succession of Isaac as rightful heir to Abraham. The comparison is particularly striking because, at least on the surface, Isaac’s succession seems quite uncontested by rivals, whereas the circumstances of Solomon’s succession to David’s throne was hotly contested. Both stories do end with a predesignated successor chosen by the father. But the implication is that even in the most clear-cut peaceful succession, there are always rivalries brewing. That is just part of the nature of being a Royal.

The rivalry and struggles brewing within the “storybook-perfect match” of Isaac and Rebecca quickly come out at the very beginning of Parashat Toledot. Now, with any set of first-born twin boys, the question of first-born rights is going to be murky: While you might be technically able to distinguish which baby exited the womb first, or the majority of the body of which baby came out first, technically both would have some claim to have come out together. The case here, where Jacob’s hand clasped the heel of Esau, implies a claim that the twins came out together as one, without a clear break between one and the next. Here, then, the succession struggles begin in the very womb, and they are anguishing struggles indeed - an omen, as Rebecca clearly realizes through her oracle, of severe struggles to come. Eventually Edom, the nation of Esau, in its tribes and branches, would be a major rival of Judea, particularly as Edom spread from its base southeast of the Dead Sea and pushed northwest into the Negev and the southern half of Judea.

Esau’s sale of the birthright for a mere “pottage of lentils” shows that Esau does not sufficiently value the sacred trust of the throne he is to inherit and certainly doesn’t appreciate the need to place the throne’s honor and good before all else. The need to do so really comes clear when placed in the context of a Royal Heir to a kingdom with the kingdom’s welfare on the line: The implication is that as king Esau would similarly sell-out, take a fast-pay-out bribe or similarly short-sell his dominion and his people’s interests. Esau does have leadership qualities as a valiant hunter and potential warrior. He must have some degree of patience as a hunter. But hunting does not take the quiet patience that shepherding and agriculture take. Esau, it is implied, looks for quick pay-offs to satisfy his personal hunger, and cannot be trusted with the long-term good of the state, people, and commonweal. This shows him unfit for the Crown.

This week’s haftarah reminds Israel and Judah that it is only Jacob’s willingness to do the opposite of Esau, to put the honor of our people and our God first, to treat whatever glory, power, and dominion we have inherited as a “sacred trust” and never to sell it out for short-term gain, which gave us the “royal rights” to what we have. After all, we are reminded, God could have made our older twin Esau the heir, but did not do so only because Esau could not be trusted to be responsible enough not to sell-out the good of God and country. Therefore, the haftarah continues, whenever Jews take shortcuts in offerings which are too cheap and not befitting of the dignity of the people and our God, it invites comparison with the “cheapness” of Esau. This is why there are such strict rules for priests and Levites: The pomp and glory demanded in the Temple are to remind us to put the honor of the commonweal first, that the commonweal which constitutes the “birthright” must be regarded as a sacred trust. Priesthood is all about the sacrifice of personal good for the greater glory. The general lesson I take from the haftarah is that in God’s demand that we put the honor and glory of the commonweal first, all of us Jewish Royals must act with the dignity and honor expected of priests, that the commonweal which constitutes our “birthright” must be regarded as nothing less than a sacred trust and duty.



## Shabbat Toledoth

November 25-26, 2022 | 2 Kislev 5783

### SHABBAT SCHEDULE

Hertz: p. 93 | Haftarah: p. 102  
Kaplan: p. 116 | Haftarah: p. 1070

**Candle Lighting** | 4:14 pm

**Friday Evening Services** | 4:15 pm | Main Sanctuary

**Friday Night Lights will return next week.**

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

**Youth Program** | 10:00 am | Fidanque Youth Room

**Kiddush** | following services

**Shabbat Afternoon Class will return next week.**

**Evening Services** | 4:05 pm | Main Sanctuary

**Habdala** | 4:58 pm

### Weekday Service Times

#### Mornings:

Sunday: 8:05 am

Monday-Friday: 7:05 am

#### Evenings:

Sunday-Thursday: **4:15 pm (note earlier time)**

*The earlier time means a harder time making a minyan. If you can help out and attend minyan, morning or evening, please contact Z. Edinger.*

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## COMMUNITY SHABBAT DINNER

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Registration Deadline: Midnight THIS Monday, November 28  
**Rabbi Soloveichik in conversation with Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem, Fleur Hassan-Nahoum**

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

Rabbi Soloveichik will engage the Deputy Mayor about her own fascinating family history, her political career, the recent elections, the diverse groups that make up the population of Jerusalem, and the future of the sacred city and the State of Israel.

### PRICING

Member Adult - \$74

Non-member Adult - \$77

Child - \$35

*Sponsorship opportunities available*

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## COMING UP

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### Chatham Square Cemetery Cleanup Day

**Sunday, December 4 | 10:00 am | Sponsored by the Hebra Hased vaAmet**

Help us remove weeds and other dead plant material, trim bushes and branches, clear the walkway, add gravel and other minor work to clean up this historic cemetery. Come in your work clothes; we supply the rest.

*RSVP at [shearithisrael.org/events/cemetery-cleanup5783](https://shearithisrael.org/events/cemetery-cleanup5783).*

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### Sisterhood Sunday Matinee Film Festival

**Next Film Discussion: Sunday, December 11**

*Films provided in advance to registrants*

*Discussion on Zoom with filmmaker & actor Emanuel Cohn on Dec. 11*

Join us for the next two films in this series in 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](https://shearithisrael.org/events/sisterhood-film-fest).**

Each film: \$10.00 | Full Series: \$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.*

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## COMING UP

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### Parent-Child Learning

**Monthly on Saturday Nights | December 10, January 14, February 18**

**Next session features Rabbi Soloveichik...and sushi!**

Learning! Pizza! Sushi! S'mores! Quality time with Shearith Israel clergy! Special sessions led by creative parents! What more could you ask for?

Make sure to register at [shearithisrael.org/parent-child5783](https://shearithisrael.org/parent-child5783).

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*In Partnership with UJA*

### Shine A Light on Antisemitism in Times Square

**Monday, December 19 | 5:00 - 6:30 pm**

**Times Square - enter at Broadway and 47th Street**

**Register at [shearithisrael.org/events/shine-a-light](https://shearithisrael.org/events/shine-a-light)**

Antisemitism is intensifying. Our efforts to fight it must be even stronger. Nearly one out of every four Jews in the U.S. experiences antisemitism. It's become normalized across our culture — on social media, in pop culture and politics, and on the streets.

This Hanukkah, UJA is joining **Shine A Light** to dispel the darkness and to say: enough is enough. In the heart of New York City, we'll publicly display our Jewish identity as we light the menorah together and raise awareness about antisemitism.

**Highlights include:**

- M.C., Ariel Elias, comedian
  - Performances by Nissim Black; The Moshav Band; David Herskowitz, Miami Boys Choir alum and TikTok star; and The Ramaz Upper School Choir
  - An appearance by Montana Tucker, TikTok influencer
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### Hanukkah Concert With Yonina

**Tuesday, December 20 | 7:00 pm | Park East Synagogue**

**In partnership with the UJA-Federation**

*Yonina* is an Israeli-American couple who started sharing music through weekly home videos on social media. Their music has now reached millions of viewers around the world, and now they're coming to our neighborhood to enhance our Hanukkah celebration! Shearith Israel is a proud official Community Partner.

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## COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

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Thank you to all our Thanksgiving Pack-A-Thon volunteers and supporters!  
**Thanks to you, we packed about 1,800 packages for families in need, and EXCEEDED our fundraising goal of \$18,000!**