

Sensitive Royal Diplomacy

Last year I remarked upon Jacob's seeming to tell Esau, after Esau came to meet him in the area of Gilead south of the Jabbok, that he was continuing south (ostensibly on the Transjordanian "Kings Highway" route) to visit Esau in his "home turf" and capital in the Mt. Seir region, in what is now southwestern Jordan, and then, rather than continuing south, Jacob moved westward, to Succoth and over the Jordan into Shekhem. This year I see this "feint" to the south of Jacob, as well as Jacob's offering of gifts and their refusal by Esau and other details of the story, in the light of Jacob's "royal" status (and Esau's, as well), as a complex and sensitive diplomatic maneuvering of royal lines.

The bearing of gifts and acceptance of them, especially among royal families who are often related, was a classic way of confirming "alliances" and making diplomacy. A careful and sensitive diplomatic "dance" is being performed here. Jacob is very fearful of Esau, who has made himself very well established in his home territory and has marched to meet Jacob with a company of 400 men. Jacob sends gifts ahead with some of his servants to propitiate Esau and make a gesture of goodwill. But Jacob's immediate family strategically stay at the back of the entourage for protection, lest Esau's approach be violent. Perhaps because of the gifts, perhaps because he sees Jacob's goodwill, Esau declines to attack and the brothers meet peacefully, exchanging an "official" kiss and embrace. But Esau has no intention of allying himself with Jacob through accepting Jacob's gifts, at least at this point. Jacob's feint to go to Esau's "capital" in Seir must be understood as his faux offer to make a "state visit" as a way of establishing regular peaceful diplomatic relations. However, Jacob was quite aware that such a visit and such relations could easily turn into a trap, especially when Esau in his ostensibly reciprocal gesture of goodwill, offers to accompany Jacob to Seir with a military escort!

No wonder, then, that Jacob plays this diplomatic game quite cannily, and uses the excuse that his children and flocks must move slowly to refuse Esau's escort offer. And then, having slipped out of Esau's immediate grasp, Jacob seizes the earliest opportunity to turn westward to Shekhem and Canaan proper to escape Esau entirely. Further on, the Parashah writes that a later King of Edom, Hadad ben Bedad, fought Midian in Moabite territory, so from that story as well as the story of Esau's meeting Jacob by marching north, we understand that much of the Transjordanian territory was considered within Esau's grasp or sphere of influence.

It is notable that the genealogy of Edomite kings seems to be given through the time of the first Israelite monarchy: This is long after the timeline of the stories of the Torah proper, but likely into the time of Joshua, Judges, and the beginning of Samuel. This Parashah, then, is intended as a kind of summation of the entire royal history of the Kingdom of Edom, marked by this canny tension, suspicious rivalry, sometimes over-lordship, rebellion, and yet somewhat fraternal and peaceful relations with a closely-related kingdom and royal house. All of us can learn from royalty a thing or two about how to conduct our affairs by thinking about our interactions with our fellows in terms of being "diplomatic" with others, for all of our relations with others have a "diplomatic" and "political" side. Although this can be criticized as adding too much etiquette and lacking honesty and straightforwardness, we would all be wise to conduct our personal affairs as if we were conducting sensitive royal diplomacy.



Shabbat Vayishlah

December 9-10, 2022 | 16 Kislev 5783

SHABBAT SCHEDULE

Hertz: p. 122 | Haftarah: p. 135

Kaplan: p. 164 | Haftarah: p. 1078

Candle Lighting | 4:11 pm

Friday Evening Services | 4:15 pm | Main Sanctuary

Friday Night Lights | following services | Main Sanctuary

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

Youth Program | 10:00 am | Fidanque Youth Room

Following Services: **Part II of Rabbi Soloveichik's Hanukkah Series**

The Menorah Through The Ages

The Menorah & the Vatican

Kiddush | following the lecture

Shabbat Afternoon Class | 3:30 pm | Rabbi Soloveichik

Evening Services | 4:05 pm | Main Sanctuary

Habdala | 4:55 pm

Parent-Child Learning | 6:30 pm | Rabbi Soloveichik

Weekday Service Times

Mornings:

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

Evenings:

Sunday-Thursday: 4:15 pm

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.

THIS SHABBAT

SHABBAT MORNING LECTURE:

The Menorah & the Vatican

Part II of Rabbi Soloveichik's 4-Part Hanukkah Series

"The Menorah Through The Ages"

THIS Shabbat, December 10 | Following Morning Services

Upcoming Dates: Shabbat Afternoon, Dec. 17 & Shabbat Morning, Dec. 24

To sponsor a session or the entire series, visit

shearithisrael.org/hanukkah-series5783.

THIS SUNDAY

Sisterhood Sunday Matinee Film Festival

Next Film Discussion, MY FATHER MY LORD

THIS Sunday, December 11

Films provided in advance to registrants | Each film: \$10

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.

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. For questions, contact rgedinger@gmail.com.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Hazak u'Barukh to the Morning Zoom study group on the completion of the book of Isaiah. If you'd like to join the group, contact Rev. Z. Edinger at zedinger@shearithisrael.org.

Mazal tob to our Segan, Michael Lustig, who will be honored with the Shofar Award at this year's JCRC Benefit, on Thursday, December 15. To support this worthy event, go to jrcrcnybenefit.org.

Mazal tob to Stan & Madeline Towne upon the birth of a granddaughter,
Anna Charlotte Ting.

We mourn the loss of our member, Emy Cohenca. Condolences to her children, Philip (& Gail) Cohenca and Nevine (& Steven) Michaan, her grandchildren, and the entire Cohenca family.

HANUKKAH WITH SHEARITH ISRAEL

Young Professionals Hanukkah Vaffle Mixer

Thursday, December 15 | 7:00 pm

For young professionals and couples in their 20s and 30s

Join us for an early Hanukkah celebration! Shearith Israel's Young Professionals will be hosting a pre-Hanukkah mixer. Enjoy pizza, waffles, and drinks as we get in the holiday mood for the days of ופלא (wonder).

Register at tinyurl.com/yp-hanukkah.

CSI Youth Hanukkah Glowfest

Sunday, December 25 | 4:00 pm

Enjoy waffles, snacks, prizes, Kahoot Trivia, family candlelighting, Rabbi Rohde & his accordion, and much more! Bring your friends and have them experience Shearith Israel's hospitality and unique waffles tradition for themselves.

See details at shearithisrael.org/events/hanukkah-glowfest.

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

Antisemitism is intensifying. It's become normalized across our culture — on social media, in pop culture and politics, and on the streets. This Hanukkah, we'll publicly display our Jewish identity as we light the menorah together and raise awareness about antisemitism.

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.

Register at shearithisrael.org/events/yonina-concert.

Candle Lighting at Shearith Israel

All nights of Hanukkah

Come experience the lighting of our colonial era *hanukkiah* (from 1730) at the conclusion of 4:25 pm evening services on each night of Hanukkah.