

DEBAR TORAH by RABBI ROHDE

Grave Purchase Begins Dynastic National-Tribal Political Entity

I want to thank Baruch-Lev Kelman's Parashab Class for helping me to clarify my thinking upon these matters, some of which I have expounded before:

In Genesis 23:6, the Hittites seem to appreciate Abraham and his special importance as a prince, a noble leader in both political and religious affairs, in the eyes of men as well as of God. But they see him as a prince "in our midst," among them; a leader among the mix of peoples (including Hittites) which constituted the Canaanites and their city-states. Up to now, they see Abraham as a Canaanite prince. Accordingly, they invite Abraham to bury his dead "in the choicest of our tombs" - in their graves which remain their property - indeed, perhaps, in burial grounds in which they bury their Canaanite leaders and their succeeding dynasties. As I remarked at the class, I don't think a single grave was needed for each body: In those days, I conjecture, "graves" were probably ossuary crypts in which several people, often leaders of the same city, or members of the same dynasty or other princely/noble families were interred. Such was probably the case with the Davidic Dynasty: This might explain the Bible's emphasis upon the interring of the Davidic kings in their tomb. The Hittites thought of Abraham among the Canaanite leadership and wanted him buried among their leaders. And even as Abraham demurred and insisted upon buying his own dynastic burial ground, they tried refusing payment because they wanted Abraham's dynasty to be considered among Canaanite dynasties: i.e., they would have had rights to bury the bones of succeeding Canaanite leaders in Machpelah along with Abraham's family. The fact that Abraham was an alien "Hebrew" coming from Syrian and Mesopotamian background did not concern them: Indeed, the prominent usage of the term "Hittite" here as opposed to Abraham's earlier companion Mamre "the Amorite" emphasizes the varied backgrounds of the Canaanites, who nonetheless came together in the patchwork political quilt of Canaanite city-state civilization.

Abraham and Sarah, however, saw themselves as quite alien from Canaanites. And God's Covenants with Abraham promised that Abraham would found a new political entity, a tribal national and dynastic entity disassociated with and discontinuous from the Canaanites and their leaders. Paying the full purchase price and witnessing the purchase publicly meant that the burial ground was to be solely Abraham's. It marks the beginning of a new dynasty and a new nation in Canaan, the nation which was to become Israel and Judah.

The other prominent episode in our Parasha, the betrothing of Isaac, is also indicative of Abraham's dynastic and tribal separation from Canaanites. Later in the Bible Israel is told to conquer the Canaanites and not assimilate among them. The fact that Abraham's "mainline" dynasty must descend from his "sister," the noble "princess" Sarah (and I note that among royal dynasties in antiquity marriages among close relatives, even siblings, was common) and must be continued through marriages of Isaac and Jacob to close relatives back in the "old country" also has to do with royal dynastic tribal-nobility founding. Indeed, perhaps the elaborate detail given about the mourning and bewailing of Sarah, as well as the details of Machpelah, are to show that Sarah is being mourned as you would a queen. How many people were acquainted with knew Sarah we don't really know (although she probably had noble blood and of course had royal contacts in the royal courts of Egypt and the Philistines), but Abraham treats her death and funeral rites as if she were Queen Elizabeth! Indeed, Isaac's mourning of Sarah doesn't really end until he crowns Rebecca as Sarah's successor.

This separate royal dynastic national entity which Abraham founds, tribal as it is, will itself be a kingdom of priests and nobility which will think of its every member as part of a familial dynasty, unlike the cosmopolitan mix of the Canaanites. The foothold which Abraham insists on acquiring in the Promised Land marks his descendants for both separation and eventual dominance. This was true moreover not only for Israel but also for Abraham's other descendants, such as the children of Hagar, Keturah, and Esau who come to dominate Arabian and desert areas. Even the children of Abraham's nephew Lot come to dominate their area. Eventually many Canaanites and others will be absorbed among Abraham's descendants, but first they must separate and insist not to be assimilated nor absorbed among Canaanites. They must separate, founding their own tribal-national entities first, before eventually they will be able to persevere.



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL
The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Shabbat Haya Sarah

November 10-11, 2023 | 27 Marbeshvan, 5784

SCHEDULE

Kaplan: p. 100 | Haftarah: p. 1066

Hertz: p. 80 | Haftarah: p. 90

Candle Lighting | 4:25 pm

Friday Evening Services | 4:30 pm | Main Sanctuary

Friday Night Lights | Following Services | Main Sanctuary | "Of Weddings, Shattered Glass, & Eternal Hope" | 5784 Season of Friday Night Lights is sponsored by the Julis-Rabinowitz family

YP & CSI Super-Shabbat Dinner | for registered guests | Levy Auditorium

Zemirot | 8:15 am | Main Sanctuary

Shahrit | 9:00 am | Main Sanctuary

Rabbi Soloveichik's Lecture | At Morning Services | "The Making of the Maccabees: A Message for our Moment"

Tot Shabbat | 10:00 am | Fidanque Youth Room

Junior Congregation | 10:30 am | Small Synagogue

Kiddush | following Services | *Scotch & Arak Sponsor: Mrs. Lisa Rohde, in memory of Ida Davidson Marks, Greta P. Brun-Kestler, Susan Davidson Barkin, & Dr. Charles David Atkins*

Shabbat Afternoon Class | 3:30 pm | Rabbi Soloveichik | "King David Lives: The Origin of An Idea"

Evening Services | 4:15 pm

Habdala | 5:10 pm

Rosh Hodesh Kislev begins on Monday night.

Weekday Service Times

Sunday Morning: 8:05 am

Monday-Friday Mornings: 7:05 am

Sunday-Thursday Evenings (**Arbit Only**): 6:30 pm

COMING UP

For details and signup, go to shearithisrael.org

Shuk To The Core:

A Traveling Israeli Vendor Fair Comes to Manhattan
One night only: THIS Monday, November 13 | 5:00-9:00 pm
Venue: Lincoln Square Synagogue

Sacred Soil: The History and Rehabilitation of the West 11th Street Cemetery

A Presentation by Rev. Z. Edinger

In Person at Shearith Israel

THIS Wednesday, November 15 | 7:00 pm (following 6:30 pm services)

Return of Motzei Shabbat Parent-Child Learning!

Session #1: November 18 | 6:00 pm | Led by Rev. Z Edinger

Session #2: December 16 | 6:00 pm | Led by Rabbi Soloveichik

Thanksgiving at Shearith Israel

Thursday, November 23



Register & Donate to our Annual Pack-A-Thon

Help us reach this year's goal of \$25,000!
Thanks to a matching grant, all contributions (up to \$10,000)
will be **doubled**.

Register Your Children for Parade Viewing

Member children & children of Pack-A-Thon donors of \$180 & up: **Free!**

Non-Member children: **\$36 in advance | \$50 at the door**

Masbia Bean Drive

Through November | Dropoff outside Levy or at any Pack-A-Thon Partner

This year, in addition to our Annual Thanksgiving Pack-A-Thon, each partner organization will also be collecting dry beans for Masbia's Soup Kitchen Network. Make sure to drop off your dry beans at Shearith Israel!

COMING UP

For details and signup, go to shearithisrael.org

Sunday Matinee with Sisterhood

All proceeds will be donated to Friends of the IDF

Sign up for all three films: \$50.00 | Individual films: \$18.00 each
Link to each film will be sent in advance for viewing at your leisure
Film discussion with host Emmanuel Cohn will take place on Zoom

FIRST FILM DISCUSSION: Sunday, November 19 | 4:00 pm

"The Women's Balcony"

Congregation Shearith Israel and the K3 Council at Japan Society present

A Story of Moral Clarity and Courage:

The Incredible Japanese Tale of Setsuzo Kotsuji,

Protector of Jews, Convert to Judaism

Monday, December 4 | 7:00 pm | At Shearith Israel

Featuring:

Rabbi Meir Soloveichik, Ambassador Mikio Mori, Consul General of Japan in
New York, & Dr. Joshua W. Walker, President and CEO of Japan Society

STANDING WITH ISRAEL

March for Israel on the National Mall

Help make this the largest pro-Israel event in American history

THIS Tuesday, November 14 | 1:00 pm | Washington, DC

Bus Transportation:

Buses organized by various institutions in our area have been selling out fast, but the options are continually evolving. We have collected a list of options for you to investigate. Check our emails for the latest leads.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mazal tob to **Valerie & Danny Feder** on the upcoming wedding this Sunday of their daughter Rebecca Feder to Kurt Moskowitz of West Orange, NJ.

Congratulations to **Josh Eisen**, who was honored at 914United's gala this past week.