

Jacob's "Meeting-Rooms" with the Divine

Our Parasha and continuing into the beginning of next week's Parasha is bookended by Jacob's "meetings" with God and God's angels in specific holy "places," each of which Jacob renames based upon the theophany which occurred in that setting. Most of these "places" of Jacob's "meetings" become significant sites in later Biblical history, and it is often understood that each had some kind of sanctuary. Beth-El was the most famous of those sites, and its sanctuary was renowned, but also Mahanaim and Penuel on opposite sides of the Jordan's fords were renowned: Mahanaim is mentioned in Joshua as a Levitical city at the southwestern boundary of Bashan. Mahanaim served as a capital-in-exile for both Ish-Bosheth, son of Saul, when escaping from David, and later for David, on-the-run from his son Absalom's rebellion. Jeroboam and his son Nadab briefly made Penuel their capital.

At both Beth-El and Mahanaim, at the beginning and end of our Parasha, the same verb is used: פגַע, a verb meaning to "meet," which is in both instances associated with a meeting "place." The verb can also mean to "entreat", and in that sense it can also mean to pray. But its main sense is to "encounter" and in that sense refers to some kind of Divine manifestation or appearance. The theophany is often a kind of "chancing upon," unexpected meeting, although Jacob's choosing a name for it hallows the place afterwards to some extent with permanent significance. At the beginning of our Parasha it is Jacob who "meets" the "Place מִקְוֵה;" at the end of the Parasha the angels of God "meet" Jacob at the Place which Jacob calls "Dual Camps" or "Mahanaim," upon Jacob's seeing them.

I choose to use the term "meeting" to translate the verb פגַע because of the association of the English term "meeting" with "meeting rooms" and "meeting spaces," as we have here with this Hebrew verb. An "encounter" might chance to be anywhere; indeed, Abraham's and Moses' theophanies revelations don't have the same sense of space associated with them, and other verbs are used. But for "meetings," even Zoom "meeting-rooms," some "set-up" or "space" must be set aside. Indeed, the associated Hebrew term מִקְוֵה for "space" comes from a root meaning "set-up" or "stand-up." Meeting in "meeting-rooms" and setting up a meeting facilitates interaction. When a meeting is set-up or when a chance encounter becomes a "face-to-face meeting," entreaties can be made and answered readily. The "meeting" facilitates direct address of the parties to one another.

Our experience with COVID and the (legitimate or illegitimate) extension of the term "meeting" to "virtual" ones on Zoom has made me particularly aware of the importance of real "meeting rooms" and meeting spaces, especially the holy space and sanctuary which is our synagogue. Among those things which I can say to encourage more post-COVID attendance at our daily minyanim and other services and activities, I'd like to point out the very special qualities of the interaction which we have at synagogue. Even when they are difficult interactions, and they often can be, they share a certain aura for me. That aura I may take for granted at times, but a neighbor I invited in remarked last night about feeling the synagogue's interior space as so particularly peaceful, so encouraging of the special kind of interaction one can only find in a Divine "meeting-space."



Shabbat Vayetse

November 24-25, 2023 | 12 Kislev, 5784

SCHEDULE

Kaplan: p. 130 | Haftarah: p. 1430

Hertz: p. 106 | Haftarah: p. 135

Candle Lighting | 4:14 pm

Friday Evening Services | 4:15 pm | Main Sanctuary

Friday Night Lights | Following Services | Main Sanctuary | *5784 Season of Friday Night Lights is sponsored by the Julis-Rabinowitz family*

Zemirot | 8:15 am | Main Sanctuary

Shahrit | 9:00 am | Main Sanctuary

Rabbi Soloveichik's Lecture | At Morning Services

Tot Shabbat | 10:00 am | Fidanque Youth Room

Youth Groups | 10:00 am | Elias Room

Junior Congregation | 10:30 am | Small Synagogue

Kiddush | following Services | *Kiddush supporter: Anna & Elia Roumani, in memory of Yaakov Nissim b. Liza on the occasion of his nahala*

Shabbat Afternoon Class | 3:30 pm | Rabbi Soloveichik

Evening Services | 4:10 pm

Habdala | 4:59 pm

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

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 Emanuel Cohn will take place on Zoom

NEXT FILM DISCUSSION: Sunday, December 3 | 4:00 pm
"Fill the Void"

Masbia Bean Drive

Through November | Drop off dry beans outside Levy Auditorium

You can still drop off your dry beans to help Masbia fight hunger!

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

With Rabbi Soloveichik & Special Guests

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

BECOME A SECURITY VOLUNTEER

Be part of a trained corps of Shearith Israel Security Volunteers

We need you NOW!

We are offering the following opportunities:

1. Interested in joining a Shearith Israel team of security volunteers? **Community Security Service (CSS)** will provide our participants with the training, guidance, and resources needed to stand ready as volunteers to protect our *kehillah*.
2. Interested in learning security basics as a way to skillfully recognize and report security or safety threats to your community? Participate in **Entry Point**, a one-hour standalone session delivered virtually by a certified CSS instructor.

Express your interest at shearithisrael.shulcloud.com/form/css-volunteer

COMING UP

For details and signup, go to shearithisrael.org

Young Professionals Shabbat Hanukkah Dinner

Friday night, December 8

Following 4:00 pm Evening Services & *Friday Night Lights*
10% of all proceeds will be donated to UJA Federation's Israel fund!

A Community Shabbat Dinner

How the Talmud Can Change Your Life:

Surprisingly Modern Advice from A Very Old Book

Rabbi Soloveichik in conversation with author, Liel Leibovitz

Friday night, Dec. 15 | After 4:15 pm Services & *Friday Night Lights*

CSI YOUTH: HanukkahQuest!

December 3 | 10:30 am-12:30 pm | with Baruch-Lev Kelman, Rabbinic Intern

Parent-Child Learning

On Select Saturday Nights | 1 hour after Habdala

Next session: December 16, with Rabbi Soloveichik

NEW CLASSES

Sponsorships available at shearithisrael.org

Weekly Parasha Class

Wednesdays | In Person, following Evening Services

With Baruch-Lev Kelman, Rabbinic Intern

Around the (Jewish) World in 20 Days: A 20-Session Series

Thursdays | In Person, following Evening Services

With Baruch-Lev Kelman, Rabbinic Intern

Sunday Morning Mishna Class

in Memory of Sgt. First Class Yosef Malachi Guedalia, HYD

In Person | Sundays, starting December 3

9:00 am (following 8:05 am Services)

With a different clergy member each week

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Welcome new member **Albert Rosenblatt** to our growing Shearith Israel family.