

Joseph the Proto-Prophet

Why does Joseph bring “bad reports of his brothers” to his father? Why is that mentioned first in our Parasha, along with Joseph’s shepherding (though Joseph wasn’t actually with the sheep, but stayed behind with his father)? What was the meaning of Israel’s dotting upon his beloved Joseph during the years of Jacob’s “dotage,” and meaning of the “striped tunic” he gave him? And given that Joseph knew that Jacob loved him more than his brothers and that his brothers hated him for that, then why did Joseph even mention his dream of domination over them? Couldn’t Joseph keep his dreams to himself? After all, Joseph must have experienced or heard of many dreams, for by the time he meets the bartender and the baker and later Pharaoh, Joseph was an expert at dream-interpretation. But why is it that it is just these particularly disturbing dreams of domination that Joseph tells, with the direst of consequences?

The answer is that Joseph is treated here as following the paradigm of a prophet or seer. Jacob himself, of course, partakes of prophecy and arouses jealousy, and Jacob, Joseph, and later Moses are famed as “shepherds.” Joseph’s “bad reports” of his brothers are reminiscent of prophetic reproach of the people for their sins. It doesn’t say that Joseph lied in these reports, but it is just such criticism of the people, whether to their faces or to their father (which I’m sure their father then let the brothers hear about) for which prophets are known, as they are so much more sensitive to wrongdoing. And this often makes prophets hated. Since our Zoom class has been studying Jeremiah and the ways Jeremiah was lambasted for his castigation of his brethren and disloyalty to them and to the Crown, this first detail about Joseph really stands out to me. Joseph, the prototypical hated prophet, is hated for his castigation of his brethren, although they probably did deserve it. And Joseph is still a lad when he starts prophesying, like many prophets who start young, when they are unafraid to tell the unadulterated truth. Israel/Jacob loves his fellow prophet. Of course, Jacob is in the years of his “dotage,” the years of his beginning to become more senile and more of a “madman.” And a madman is often more prophetic, especially as he reaches a hoary old-age. Indeed, perhaps the term “child of his dotage” means that Joseph, although actually young, was himself acting like a hoary old (perhaps semi-mad) prophet, telling of his dreams. The striped tunic is a sign Joseph is designated for leadership, a leadership which was likely priestly/prophetic (like Samuel and Jeremiah who served both priestly and prophetic functions).

Despite his brothers’ known hatred of him, Joseph tells his dreams of the sheaves, stars, sun, and moon to his brothers anyway because he knew these were no ordinary dreams, but rather true prophecies. And a true prophesy like this could not be squelched nor suppressed. Unlike Jeremiah, we are not told that Joseph was commanded to proclaim his dreams, but it was clear to Joseph that these particular dreams were Divine messages which he must proclaim, despite the dreams’ intimations that his brethren and parents would be subjugated. This is why Joseph proclaims his dreams loud and clear: “Hear ye now, this dream I have dreamt!” Jacob recognizes that Joseph in proclaiming that even his parents will bow down to him, along with his older siblings, is expressing disloyalty, much like Jeremiah is later disloyal to the regular political regime, as well as seeming to turn traitor to his own people. But Jacob “kept the word in mind:” He realized that Joseph had spoken the Word of True Prophecy, a Word which must be preserved until its eventual fulfillment. Like later Jeremiah, Joseph must face imprisonment and take a beating as a consequence of his message. The brothers talk of hurting and killing Joseph not because they don’t like Joseph’s snootiness but because they want to keep these prophecies from coming true. But the “man” who directs Joseph to his brothers would seem to be some kind of angelic messenger sent to Joseph the Prophet. The rest of Joseph’s salvation continues the story of the miraculous way Prophet Joseph survives and Joseph’s prophecy gets fulfilled. Later on, of course, Joseph is explicitly recognized as acting as Prophetic Seer/Diviner for both Pharaoh as well as for his brethren. This role of Prophet involves many seeming disloyalties and betrayals of his brethren. Indeed, in bringing his family to Egypt, Joseph brings salvation to his people but also, like Jeremiah, dooms them to subjugation. But ultimately Joseph, like Jeremiah, prophecies redemption, and it is Joseph’s bones, alone among his brothers, which Joseph foresees as being redeemed along with his People.



Shabbat Vayesheb

December 8-9, 2023 | 26 Kislev, 5784

SCHEDULE

Kaplan: p. 182 | Haftarah: p. 1364 | Hanukkah: p. 694
Hertz: p. 141 | Haftarah: p. 987 | Hanukkah: p. 597

- Candle Lighting (2 Hanukkah Candles)** | 4:11 pm
- Friday Evening Services** | 4:00 pm | Main Sanctuary
- Friday Night Lights** | Following Services | Main Sanctuary | *5784 Season of Friday Night Lights is sponsored by the Julis-Rabinowitz family*
- Young Professionals Shabbat Hanukkah Dinner** | Following Friday Night Lights | *For registered guests* | Elias Room
- 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
- Shabbat Afternoon Class** | 3:30 pm | Rabbi Soloveichik
- Evening Services** | 4:05 pm
- Habdala & 3 Hanukkah Candles** | 4:55 pm

Rosh Hodesh Tebet begins on Tuesday night.

Weekday Service Times

Sunday Morning: 8:05 am | Monday-Friday Mornings: 7:05 am
Sunday-Thursday Evenings (Arbit Only): 6:30 pm

Hanukkah continues through next Thursday. Join us at Evening Services to view the lighting of our colonial era hanukkiyah, which has been in use since the 1730s.

Hanukkah alegre!

HANUKKAH AT SHEARITH ISRAEL

Shabbat Hanukkah: Special Choral Pieces

This Shabbat, our choir will sing *Min HaMetsar* during the *Hallel* (around 9:30 am). This wonderful and elaborate piece was written by the famous French composer, Jacques Fromental HaLevy. It was formerly sung by our choir on Thanksgiving but has now become part of our service for *Shabbat Hanukkah*. This piece, along with *En Kelobenu* set to Handel's *See, the Conquering Hero Comes* from *Judas Maccaebus*, and the *Maoz Tzur*/"Rock of Ages" theme, makes Shabbat Hanukkah at Shearith Israel a particular standout in the musical calendar of our synagogue.

Hanukkah Candle Lighting

Candles	Date	Evening Services	Candle Lighting
1	Th Dec 7	6:30 pm	4:29 pm
2	Fri Dec 8	4:00 pm	by 4:11 pm
3	Sa Dec 9	4:05 pm	after 4:55 pm
4	Su Dec 10	6:30 pm	4:29 pm
5	Mo Dec 11	6:30 pm	4:29 pm
6	Tu Dec 12	6:30 pm	4:29 pm
7	We Dec 13	6:30 pm	4:29 pm
8	Th Dec 14	6:30 pm	4:29 pm

NEW CLASSES

For details & sponsorships, go to 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 | 9:00 am (following 8:05 am Services)

Through collective study, we honor the memory of Yosef Guedalia, a grandson of the Guedalia & Bendheim families of our congregation, who was killed defending Israel on October 7.

COMING UP

Parent-Child Learning

On Select Saturday Nights | 1 hour after Habdala

Next session with Rabbi Soloveichik:

December 16 | 6:00 pm

SAVE THE DATE: Friday Night, January 5

The Return of *Magevet*,

Yale's premier Jewish acapella group

Preferred Pricing for Families and Supervised Play for Children

Registration coming soon!

If you're able to offer home hospitality (accommodations only) to our *Magevet* guests, contact breiss@shearithisrael.org.

Sunday Matinee with Sisterhood

All proceeds will be donated to Friends of the IDF

Individual films: \$18.00 each

Link to film will be sent in advance for viewing at your leisure

Film discussion with host Emanuel Cohn will take place on Zoom

FINAL FILM DISCUSSION: Sunday, January 7 | 4:00 pm

"Footnote"

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS



Condolences to Aviva & Marvin Sussman, upon the passing of their great-nephew **Sgt. First Class (res.) Ben Zussman**, who fell battling Hamas in Gaza this week. We extend our sympathies to the entire Bendheim, Salomon, and Zussman family. Ben Zussman and his cousin Yosef Guedalia were both great-grandsons of our late members **Charles & Els Bendheim**. Both of them fell in combat with Hamas.

ה' יקום דמם.

Mazal tob to **Shlomit & Chaim Edelstein** on making *aliyah* this week.

Mazal tob to our Yoetzet Halakha, **Ellin Cooper**, and her husband, Jeremy, upon the birth of a baby girl.

Thank you to last week's kiddush sponsors, **Karen & Jack Daar**, in honor of Baruch-Lev Kelman giving his first Shabbat morning seminar.