

It's All for the Best:

**The Irrepressible Optimism of Joseph's Prophetic Vision**

What made Joseph, and Judah, for that matter, worthy of being the successors to Jacob? In many ways they were flawed characters, seeming more flawed than their forefathers. Now as Raizy Chechik, our speaker last week, pointed out, Joseph showed many signs of great psychological, ethical and spiritual growth, as does Judah. One can invoke the rabbinic adage that "[sinners] who repent reach a level at which even the most completely righteous cannot stand," and assert that this development of character makes them great and accounts for God's choice of them as worthy successors to Jacob. But many characters undergo such a development as they mature, including the "crooked" Jacob himself, who is obviously seen as flawed, and he too grows and "straightens out," as his later name Israel implies. Were the changes in Jacob any less drastic? Should Joseph's development of character alone be thought of as qualifying him for leadership?

To explain what made Joseph worthy of succeeding Jacob as leader, I'd rather go back to my conclusion from last week, that the stories of Jacob's sons show that God's ways can be mysterious and inscrutable, indeed, torturous - even apparently unjust, full of outrightly undeserved misfortune - and yet they can end up being providential, vindicating their goodness in the end. I'd like to say that Joseph was worthy to be called righteous, the tsaddik, because he, like a mourner, was able to say the "tsidduk ha-din" - he was able to vindicate the Divine Decree. Flip ahead to Parashat Vayhi and the difference between Jacob and Joseph becomes clear: Jacob at the end of his life gripes in front of Pharaoh about how bad his life has been, and how much worse he had it than his forefathers - whereas all Joseph's statements are variants of the classic refrain: "It was all for the best." The contrast is glaring: Joseph is ever upbeat, only seeing the silver linings in things, whereas his father Jacob always saw evil starkly outlined and spent his life struggling against it. Looking back, one can see this element in Joseph from the very beginning: Joseph is from the first a visionary dreamer, a seer whose vision peers straight into the future, always seeing the providential good in God's plan, never even noticing the inscrutable cloud of evil which seems to shroud it for everyone else. One might ask: If Joseph was such a good seer, why didn't he see his brother's ensnarement of him coming? But the answer is precisely that Joseph's X-Ray prophetic vision penetrated through so completely that he always saw straight through to the providentially good side of things, not even bothering to note possible downsides.

This was precisely Joseph's naivete. Joseph's righteousness from Day One was that he was upbeat about everything - too upbeat. After all, Joseph thought, if he as ruler of his clan could bring prosperity to all, well then, why wouldn't they want to appoint him as their head and kowtow to his leadership! We all know ambitious and successful businessmen who think this way! From Joseph's upbeat and forward-looking perspective, he prophesied profit for them all in the long-term, but failed to appreciate the drawbacks of the inequity which would be generated. Why, I'm sure Joseph's reports to his father about his brothers were full of little "suggestions" and "objective" observations he thought might be helpful in improving the efficiency and profitability of their shepherding, but they still came off as making his siblings look bad! Joseph may not have seen any downsides, but his father and brothers surely did! By contrast, Jacob was far more cautious and fearful in approach, for example, when sending his

*(continued inside)*



**Shabbat Mikkets-Hanukkah**

*December 27-28, 2024 | 27 Kislev, 5785*

**SCHEDULE**

Hertz: p. 155 | Hanukkah: p. 598 | Haftarah: p. 987  
Kaplan: p. 200 | Hanukkah: p. 696 | Haftarah: p. 1360

**Candle Lighting (3 Hanukkah & Shabbat)** | 4:18 pm  
**Evening Services** | 4:15 pm | Levy Auditorium  
**Friday Night Lights: Hanukkah Edition** | Rabbi Soloveichik | following services | *5785 Season sponsored by the Julis Romo Rabinowitz family*

**Zemirot** | 8:15 am | Levy Auditorium  
**Shahrit** | 9:00 am | Levy Auditorium  
**Tot Shabbat** | 10:00 am | Fidanque Youth Room  
**Youth Groups & Junior Congregation** | 10:30 am | Little Synagogue  
**Kiddush** | following services | Elias Room

**Shabbat Afternoon Class** | 3:30 pm | Rabbi Soloveichik  
**Teen Shiur** | 3:30 pm | Baruch-Lev Kelman  
**Evening Services** | 4:15 pm  
**Habdala & 4 Hanukkah Candles** | 5:03 pm

*Hanukkah continues through Thursday, Jan. 2. Rosh Hodesh Tebet begins on Monday night.*

**Weekday Service Times**

**Mornings:**

Sunday & Wednesday (January 1): 8:05 am  
Monday-Tuesday & Thursday-Friday: 7:05 am

**Evenings:**

**Sunday-Thursday (Minha & Arbit): 4:30 pm**

*Our office will be closed on January 1 for the legal holiday.*

## DEBAR TORAH *by* RABBI ROHDE

*(continued from back panel)*

children back to Egypt to rescue a captured brother.

But it was precisely Joseph's indefatigably optimistic view of a Providential future despite all the evil ahead which was necessary to succeed Jacob's darker and more cautious view. True, Jacob with his own vision of a glorious national future was also capable of withstanding much hardship and evil. But if Israel was to withstand losing their independence and the abject slavery, repression, and persecution which lay ahead, they would have to incorporate into their character the indefatigable optimism and resiliency of Joseph. Joseph was the man who could never be kept down, who could see God's design for the best in every evil which befell him. There were many times when Israel cried out and murmured against the evil which they faced, but they were never to entirely forget this lesson, a lesson which would serve them well through every tragedy and exile. They held onto the vision of prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel who divined that despite all the current appearances of the evils of destruction and exile, God's Providence is still at work. They trusted that God will vindicate the evil through the good yet to come, eventually showing that it was all for the best. This indefatigable optimism of Joseph, this ability to see and embrace God's beneficent Providence even in the face of evil, death, destruction, and exile, is what would make the Nation of Israel irrepressible.

### SAVE THE DATE

#### Community Shabbat Dinner: Magevet Returns!

**Friday Night, Shabbat Shira, February 7**

Enjoy a festive Shabbat dinner enhanced by a musical performance by Magevet, Yale University's Jewish, Hebrew, and Israeli acapella group. Registration coming soon!

### COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mazal tob to **Maggie & Andre Guenoun**, upon the birth of a grandson, born to their daughter, Rebecca (Guenoun) Hagler, and her husband Michael

Thank you to **Diane Sandoval** for gifting the synagogue two new Torah Bands. We plan on using them this Shabbat, specially for Hanukkah.

### EARLY BIRD OFFER

**Pre-Pay Next Year's Dues at This Year's Rates!**

*Until January 15, 2025*

Members, remember that you can pre-pay your July 2025-June 2026 dues now at this membership year's rates. See our emails for the link to pre-pay. **Note: You must be logged into your Shulcloud account in order to pay your dues.**

And don't forget your year-end gifts **before December 31!**

## HANUKKAH AT SHEARITH ISRAEL

### CSI YOUTH: HanukkahQuest!

**THIS Sunday, December 29 | 10:30 am | with Baruch-Lev Kelman**

**Co-starring special musical guest Rabbi Ira Rohde and his accordion!**

This Hanukkah, join Baruch-Lev and his merry band of Maccabees as they set off in search of waffles, treasure, and the spirit of Hanukkah. Get ready to make your own Maccabee tunic and crown. Expect music, dancing, and more waffles!

**Don't forget to bring an old bedsheet - and your friends!**

*Make sure to register (it's free!) so we can be sure to have enough waffles for everyone!*

*Sign up at [shearithisrael.org/hanukkahquest5785](http://shearithisrael.org/hanukkahquest5785).*

### Hanukkah Candle Lighting Times

**Wednesday night, December 25-Wednesday, January 1**

Join us at 4:15 pm Evening Services to view the lighting of our colonial era Hanukkiah (c. 1730). If you are lighting at home, refer to the chart below for the lighting times.

(Except for Friday, candles should be lit no earlier than the time listed.)

Date:	NYC lighting time:
3 — Shabbat & Candle Lighting, Friday, December 27	4:18 pm (Hanukkah candles should be lit first)
4 — Habdala & Candle Lighting, Saturday, December 28	5:03 pm (Habdala should be recited first)
5 — Sunday, December 29	4:37 pm
6 — Monday, December 30	4:38 pm
7 — Tuesday December 31	4:39 pm
8 — Wednesday, January 1	4:40 pm

### COMING UP

*Sign up at [shearithisrael.org](http://shearithisrael.org)*

#### (Virtual) Sunday Matinee with Sisterhood

*All proceeds will be donated to help families of Israeli soldiers*

### FINAL FILM DISCUSSION:

**Sunday, January 26 | 4:00 pm | Walk on Water (2004)**

*A link is sent to registrants to watch the film a week before the appointed date, together with a second link to join the Sunday discussion on Zoom.*