

Weighty Sin Produces an Outcry for Justice

“Then the LORD said, ‘The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and their sin, for it is very weighty. I will go down now, and see if they have done entirely according to her outcry, which has come to Me; and if not, I will know.’” (Gen. 18:20-21)

“Because we are about to destroy this place. For the outcry to the LORD against its people is so great that He has sent us to destroy it.” (Gen. 19:13)

An unusual expression repeatedly recurs regarding the sin of Sodom, one which recalls Cain’s murder of Abel. Repeatedly, the sin of Sodom is said to be “calling out,” which apparently means “crying out” for justice, for correction and punishment or other remediation. Sodom’s “outcry” is so grievous (and hence “loud”), having reached its limit, that it reaches the “ears of God” so to speak. But can one properly refer to a city having an “outcry”? Rashi gives this as the plain meaning, but the expression is unusual enough that he references a midrashic tale which has “her cry” refer to a girl resident who was put to death for feeding the poor. But the apparent plain meaning is reminiscent of the “your brother’s blood’s voice cries out to me from the earth” in the story of Cain and Abel. The very earth of a place can emit an outcry. Sin can become “grievous,” “crying out” for justice. Evil can be “infamous” in God’s eyes even apart from how much people actually have heard about it. After all, in the days of Cain there were few people around, and Cain thought he had adequately handled of the matter by letting the earth absorb his brother’s blood (and likely his brother’s body along with that blood, as well).

But even if people don’t hear or pay attention to the “outcry” which sin makes, God hears and sees and the God as Divine Judge will demand a reckoning. Even when a plaintiff is no longer alive to cry out for justice in court, the city and the country itself becomes the plaintiff. It becomes the responsibility of the city and state to prosecute, as we say in our law courts that cases are brought in the name of the “State of New York” or “The People against Mr. X.” Do not think that criminality and sin can be hushed-up. When there is no plaintiff to press charges, It is the responsibility of the municipality to investigate and prosecute, to make sure that all of the collective victims’ voices are heard. And though the city may be so corrupt that it does not judge and correct the evildoers, God surely hears. The case will come before God’s court, and God will hear the suit of the silenced plaintiffs. Do not think that evil and injustice can be hidden from God. It is better that Man should take responsibility for justice: That is the deal God struck with Noah’s descendants after the Flood, in the Covenant of the Rainbow. When justice is not meted out and enforced by a city or state, the sin is weighty indeed, weighty enough to tip the scales of Divine Justice. The entire city suffers and brings about destruction upon itself, if not in such a dramatic fashion as Sodom’s. The sin and injustice of a place produces an outcry from the very Earth upon which it is founded, an outcry which is always heard by God, even when He doesn’t directly respond. Do not think no one notices.



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL
The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Shabbat Vayera

November 7-8, 2025 | 17 Marheshvan, 5786

SCHEDULE

Kaplan: Parasha: 78 | Haftarah: 1060

Hertz: Parasha: 63 | Haftarah: 76

Candle Lighting | 4:27 pm

Evening Services | 4:30 pm | Main Sanctuary

Friday Night Lights | Following Services | Rev. Zachary Edinger
5786 Season sponsored by the Julis-Romo-Rabinowitz family

Zemirot | 8:15 am | Main Sanctuary

Shahrit | 9:00 am | Main Sanctuary

Tot Shabbat | 10:00 am | Fidanque Youth Room

Jr. Congregation | 10:30 am | Little Synagogue

Kiddush | following services | *Kiddush Supporter: Michael & Edie Sasson-Gelman, in memory of Iris & Udi Sasson, on the occasion of their nahalot*

Teen Shiur will not meet this week.

Shabbat Afternoon Class | 3:35 pm | Baruch-Lev Kelman

Evening Services | 4:20 pm

Habdala | 5:13 pm

Weekday Service Times

Mornings:

Sunday: 8:05 am

Monday-Friday: 7:05 am

Evenings:

Sunday: **4:30 pm**

Monday-Thursday (**Arbit Only**): **6:30 pm**

MEET OUR NEW YOUTH DIRECTORS!

Welcome Dalya Stokar & Jake Frankel!

Starting THIS Shabbat

Tots through Teens, please join Jr. Congregation at 10:30 am.

Everyone, please come meet Dalya & Jake at Kiddush!

To learn about Dalya & Jake, go to shearithisrael.org/youth.

IN CELEBRATION OF THE US SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL

And 250 Years of Jewish Life in the United States



Rabbi Soloveichik's Major Lecture Series

Next Installment:

Shabbat, November 15 (at Shearith Israel)

More to follow

These lectures highlight Shearith Israel's historic personalities central to the founding and formation of our American democracy.

Stay up to date at shearithisrael.org/us-250.

A Very Special Semiquincentennial Thanksgiving

Thursday Morning, November 27

Register at shearithisrael.org/thanksgiving2025

- **Special Thanksgiving Hallel & Rabbi's Address in the Main Sanctuary**
- **Children's Parade Viewing on the Portico**
- **Pack-A-Thon on Paved Paradise**

Thanksgiving Pack-A-Thon

We are proud to once again join with our community faith partners, **The Jewish Center, West End Church**, and the **Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints**, to celebrate Thanksgiving in the true spirit of the day – by giving to others.

Help us feed thousands of struggling families!

Again this year, all contributions (up to \$10,000) will be matched.

Help us reach this year's goal of \$30,000!

Children's Parade Viewing

Our Portico provides one of the best Thanksgiving Parade views in the city. But it's not that big. In order to avoid crowding on the Portico, **parade viewing is for children.**

COMING UP

Register at shearithisrael.org

Preparing With Wisdom, Planning With Love, Strength For The Journey

A Practical & Important Healthcare Workshop for Everyone

Sponsored by the Sisterhood and the Hebra | Presented by Ematai

THIS Sunday, November 9 | 4:00 pm

This interactive workshop will run for 50–60 minutes and engage participants in discussion.

Presented by the Shearith Israel League

The Jewish Legacy of Broadway:

The Immigrants and Yiddish Theatre to *Fiddler on the Roof*

Sunday, November 16 | 3:00 pm | At Shearith Israel | \$5 per person

Award-winning stage and film director **Stephen Nachamie** will explore and celebrate the theatrical legacy of the Jewish immigrants in NYC, the Yiddish Theatre, and *Fiddler on the Roof* – the work of Joseph Stein, Jerry Bock, and Sheldon Harnick.

Monthly Public Synagogue Tour

Next Tour: THIS Wednesday, November 12 | 5:45 pm

Individuals and groups are welcome to attend a free, guided tour on the second Wednesday of every month at 5:45 pm (prior to Evening Services), led by Rev. Z. Edinger.

Suggested donation of \$5 per person; any amount appreciated. Tours generally last 45 minutes.

Sunday Matinee Virtual Film Festival with Sisterhood

Four Film Discussions on Select Sundays

Sunday December 7 | 4:00 pm | Ushpizin (2004)

Sunday, January 11 | 4:00 pm | Norman (2006)

Sunday, February 8 | 4:00 pm | The Testament (2017)

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mazal tob to **Lauren & Mitchell Presser**, upon the birth of grandchildren (boy & girl twins!), born to Talya & Ilan Portnoy.

Mazal tob to **Robin Chemers Neustein**, upon being honored at Rockefeller University's recent 2025 CELEBRATING SCIENCE Benefit Dinner.

Mazal tob to **Gail Propp**, upon being honored at the forthcoming American Friends of Shaare Zedek Heart of Jerusalem Dinner on November 19.

We wish everyone who is joining Rabbi Soloveichik and our friends at Ahavath Israel in Newport this weekend for the special Semiquincentennial program a wonderful time.