

## DEBAR TORAH *by* RABBI ROHDE

### Prosperity Makes Us Forgetful & Ungrateful, Even for the Most Extraordinary

The circumstances whereby Pharaoh's Butler lost and regained his prominent post were by any account extraordinarily providential. That he would have risen to attain such a post in the first place, in a position to be so close to Pharaoh and hence influential, in a totalitarian society, would have been quite unusual and worthy of gratitude, despite all the pressure it put him under. But then to have been summarily dismissed along with his fellow artisan in the food service, the Baker, and for the both of them to have been incarcerated suddenly together, due to some whimsical suspicion of Pharaoh, was a remarkable change in fortune. Then for the two colleagues to have had these portentous dreams, clearly significant and seemingly close in character, was noteworthy. And their failure to find satisfactory interpretations of these clear portents must have left them deeply baffled and concerned. The Butler should have been deeply indebted to Joseph for his auspicious and favorable prognostication, particularly when contrasted with the ominous end Joseph augured for the Baker. And then, when both prognostications were fulfilled, indeed, on the very same day, the day marking the astrological conjunctions of Pharaoh's birth, with one of the two artisans restored to former glory and one summarily executed, all at the whim of Pharaoh: That should have made the Butler thank his lucky stars for the Providence which spared him his colleague's fate and raised and restored him from the depths of the pit of incarceration to be seated upon high in the council of the powerful. The Butler owed an immense debt of gratitude to Joseph and to Joseph's God for such pearls of enlightening and illuminating prophetic insight, for which he should have been eternally grateful. The Butler should have immediately mentioned Joseph's case to Pharaoh. His own unjust incarceration should have inspired the Butler to have pity upon Joseph as well as upon all those unjustly incarcerated in Pharaoh's prisons and to seek legal review and redress of their cases.

But as soon as the Butler is restored to his position and his prosperity once again, he totally forgets. He forgets Joseph and he forgets all of God's Providence over him. Instead of gratitude inspiring him to remember God and seek God's Justice for all, he forgets all the downtrodden and unjustly imprisoned with whom he served time. Only when Pharaoh needs help with a portentous dream of his own does, when Joseph suddenly might be "useful," does the Butler finally "remember" Joseph. Our Parasha ends with this terrible dereliction and basest ingratitude of the Butler's his "forgetfulness." In next week's Parasha the Butler confesses these ingratitude and failures of recollection before Pharaoh as his "sins."

And what causes such forgetfulness and its concomitant ingratitude? Clearly it is the very prosperity to which the Butler had attained and to which he was restored and the mindset which that engendered, which required, it is true, devotion to his duties, but also wiped his mind clean of any recollection of his former state and any gratitude for having been rescued. Having now been elevated, he has forgotten his former downtrodden state and the downtrodden state of his fellows who suffered unjustly with him. Deuteronomy and the Prophetic books will later rail against those who become prosperous and fat in satiety and abundance and forget all sense of thanksgiving to God and identification with the cause of the downtrodden. All this is being prefigured in this narrative of the Butler's forgetfulness of Joseph. Israel also has been the subject of many prophetic and portentous visions, some of which are quite vexing. And Israel has experienced being cast down to the pit, as well as wondrous salvations. When Israel regains our prosperity, we have had the natural tendency to become fat and lazy, ungrateful and even rebellious to God. It is to rectify this natural tendency to forget how bad things were, to serve as a counterweight to this natural ingratitude and to make us thankful for every redemptive step of God along the way, that a great many of the Torah's laws are framed.



## CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue Shabbat Vayesheb

December 12-13, 2025 | 23 Kislev, 5786

### SCHEDULE

**Kaplan:** Parasha: 182 | Haftarah: 1082

**Hertz:** Parasha: 141 | Haftarah: 157

**Candle Lighting** | 4:11 pm

**Evening Services** | 4:15 pm | Main Sanctuary

**Friday Night Lights** | following services | Rabbi Soloveichik | *5786 Season sponsored by the Julis-Romo-Rabinowitz family*

**Zemiroth** | 8:15 am | Main Sanctuary

**Shahrit** | 9:00 am | Main Sanctuary

**Women's Service** | 9:00 am | *in honor of Hella Sasson-Gelman's Bat Mitzvah* | Little Synagogue

**Tot Shabbat** | 10:00 am | Fidanque Youth Room

**Jr. Congregation** | 10:30 am | **Fidanque Youth Room**

**Kiddush Luncheon** | following services | *Sponsored by the Sasson-Gelman family, in honor of Hella becoming a Bat Mitzvah*

**Shabbat Afternoon Class** | 3:30 pm | Rabbi Soloveichik

**Teen Shiur** | 3:30 pm | Baruch-Lev Kelman

**Evening Services** | 4:10 pm

**Habdala** | 4:56 pm

### Hanukkah Lighting & Service Times

| Date            | # of Candles | Candle Lighting | Morning Services | Evening Services |
|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|
| Sun, Dec 14     | 1            | 4:29 pm         | 8:05 am          | 4:15 pm          |
| Mon, Dec 15     | 2            | 4:30 pm         | 7:05 am          | 4:15 pm          |
| Tues, Dec 16    | 3            | 4:30 pm         | 7:05 am          | 4:15 pm          |
| Wed, Dec 17     | 4            | 4:30 pm         | 7:05 am          | 4:15 pm          |
| Thurs, Dec 18   | 5            | 4:31 pm         | 7:05 am          | 4:15 pm          |
| Fri, Dec 19     | 6            | before 4:13 pm  | 7:05 am          | 4:15 pm          |
| Shabbat, Dec 20 | 7            | after 4:55 pm   | 8:15 am          | 4:10 pm          |
| Sun, Dec 21     | 8            | 4:32 pm         | 8:05 am          | 4:15 pm          |

## IN CELEBRATION OF THE US SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL

*And 250 Years of Jewish Life in the United States*



### Rabbi Soloveichik's Major Lectures

Next Shabbat, December December 20

After Morning Services

“The Hessians & the Founding of Wall Street:  
An ‘Only in America’ Story”

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](http://shearithisrael.org/us-250).*

EARLY BIRD PRICING ENDS **THIS MONDAY, DEC. 15**

### A Musical Shabbat Shira Dinner

*Featuring Magevet, Yale's premier Jewish a capella group*

Friday night, Shabbat Shira, January 30

Following Evening Services & Friday Night Lights

*Preferred pricing for Families and Young Professionals*

Following our Friday evening services, registered guests will enjoy a festive Shabbat dinner enhanced by a musical performance by Magevet, Yale University's Jewish a capella group. This year, as part of our Squintennial celebrations, Magevet will include a selection of Americana.

*Register and sponsor at [shearithisrael.org](http://shearithisrael.org).*

## COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mazal tob to **Hella Sasson-Gelman**, upon becoming a Bat Mitzvah. Congratulations as well to her parents, **Edie Sasson-Gelman & Michael Gelman**, and her brother, **Ness**.

Mazal tob to **Leah & Yosef Solomon**, upon the birth of a daughter. Congratulations as well to **Beth Goldman & Parnas Louis Solomon**, and to aunts **Lia** and **Tess**.

Mazal tob to **Rachel Neumark Herlands & Jonathan Herlands**, upon the birth of a grandson, born to their children, Natalia & William Herlands.

Thank you to **Alice Amelar**, for sponsoring a Sunday breakfast in honor of Hella Sasson-Gelman becoming a Bat Mitzvah.

Hazak u'Barukh to our morning **Prophets class on Zoom** on the completion of Sefer Malakhi—and with it, all of Nevi'im.

We mourn the loss of our longtime member, **Viviane Bregman**.

Condolences to her children, **Bertie (& Rachel)**, **Anthony (& Malaika)**, and **Peter (& Eleanor) Bregman**.

Condolences to **Janice Ovadiah**, upon the passing of her husband, Isaac Ovadiah.

Condolences to **Lisa (& Rabbi Ira) Rohde**, upon the passing of Lisa's aunt, Cynthia Marks Atkins.

## COMING UP

*Details and registration at [shearithisrael.org](http://shearithisrael.org)*

*Of Interest: Looking Ahead: Mobilizing Our Community  
Panel Conversation With: Hindy Poupko, UJA Federation of NY; Gary Ginsberg, New York Solidarity Network; Mark Treyger, Jewish Community Relations Council*

**Monday, December 22 | 7:30 pm | At WSIS, 120 W 76th Street**

Join local synagogues and organizations to learn about upcoming political races and how you can get involved and make a difference.

## Sunday Matinee Virtual Film Festival with Sisterhood

*Film Discussions on Select Sundays*

**Sunday, January 11 | 4:00 pm | Norman (2016)**

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

## KIDS KORNER

### Parasha Riddle

Kids: to win a raffle ticket at kiddush, find Dalya & Jake, and answer this riddle:

*Worn by Joseph, shining bold and bright,  
A cloak of colors dancing in the light.  
A gift that stirred his brothers' jealous note,  
Telling dreams in hues that seemed to float –  
What am I?*

## The Great Hanukkah Spin Off

**THIS Sunday, December 14 | 10:00 am**

*Free, but make sure to register so we can have enough snacks and supplies!*

## FAITH FOR FOOD

*Learn more at [shearithisrael.org/giving/faith-for-food](http://shearithisrael.org/giving/faith-for-food)*

“Faith for Food,” Masbia's UWS Food Annex at Shearith Israel – Announced on Thanksgiving, launched on Tuesday in time for Hanukkah. This year-round weekly (on Tuesdays) kosher food pantry will provide ample & nutritious grocery staples to our neighbors.

### To Help Someone with Food Insecurity

If you have a neighbor in Manhattan who might benefit from this food delivery program, email [CSIAnnex@masbiarelief.org](mailto:CSIAnnex@masbiarelief.org) with their name and cell phone number. A trained Masbia representative will reach out to them to get them enrolled.

### To Get Involved

#### FUNDING

This project requires over \$50,000 in financial support per year.

Visit the webpage to contribute.

#### VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Information for volunteering will be available over the next few weeks.

Stay tuned to learn about ways to get involved.