

DEBAR TORAH by RABBI ROHDE

The Ideal of Brotherly Peace and Love

“Not so, my lord,” they replied. “Your servants have come to buy food. We are all sons of one man. Your servants are honest men, not spies.” “No,” be told them. “You have come to see if our land is vulnerable.” But they answered, “Your servants are twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan. The youngest is now with our father, and one is no more.” Then Joseph declared, “Just as I said, you are spies! And this is how you will be tested: As surely as Pharaoh lives, you shall not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here” (Gen. 42:10-15)

Why do ten of Jacob’s sons go down to Egypt and appear together before Pharaoh? Couldn’t fewer of them have sufficed to buy and bring back food? And moreover, what is meant by the brothers’ mentioning to Joseph that they came as ten brothers, sons of the same father, and Joseph’s reiteration of that claim and making use of it against them? It is true that this eventually results in the fulfillment of Joseph’s dream of having all his eleven brothers bow to him, but does it really make sense?

Already at the beginning of Chapter 42 Jacob seems to urge all ten brothers to go bring back food from Egypt, and indeed castigates them all for not doing all they could to save their families from starvation when such provisions were available. Jacob’s expression seems to mean something like “why do you just stand there, idly looking around, while we’re all starving?” Although some commentators mention the risks involved in sending all ten brothers, Jacob seems conspicuously unconcerned. Indeed, it is notable how Jacob cares for Benjamin so exclusively that he seems to lack any real concern for any danger to the other ten. Although Jacob does not know definitively that the ten of them were responsible for selling Joseph, a cloud of negativity and distrust for not having been more responsible and perhaps prevented Joseph’s disappearance seems to have created a deep rift or fissure in Jacob’s relation with the ten. So perhaps Jacob doesn’t even care enough about the ten of them to worry about the dangers they faced. And perhaps Jacob’s negativity leads him to this castigation of their laziness. It’s also possible that, although they could have sent servants, the amount of food needed for such a large family, with ten patriarchs, their children, spouses, and grandchildren, would have required the whole crew to bring back enough food. Or perhaps Jacob just wants to teach his sons to take the kind of responsibility which he himself had to take in leaving Isaac and fleeing the Land of Israel to becoming a slave to Laban, just in order to survive: Now Jacob is telling his sons that they must take the same risks, leaving their father and freedom in Canaan to go down to Egypt, despite the risk that they too may become enslaved, but risks worth taking in order to ensure their families’ survival.

A party of ten grown men, men who had experience in wiping out Shekhem and the confidence which came with such, could easily have been seen as threatening: Joseph seems quite within the realm of plausibility to accuse them of belligerent intentions and being foreign scouts or “spies.” Joseph implies that the ten brothers were like the later twelve “spies” which Moses later assigned to belligerently scout out the Land. And the later twelve “spies,” although not actually siblings, were indeed descendants of these brothers. So what do the brothers mean by justifying their up-front, honest and friendly intentions towards Joseph by saying that they are all “brothers”?

Well, “brotherly love” is an ideal of peacefulness, caring, and taking responsibility. It is an ideal which the ten brothers had clearly failed in previously. It was the ideal which Cain miserably failed to live up to. But it is so obvious and widespread an ideal, that within a family jealousy and enmity must be put aside for family peace and harmony, that Joseph’s brothers cannot avoid using the expression of “brotherhood” to prove and justify their peaceful intentions. If they are indeed brothers, they mean, their intentions must perforce be “brotherly” and peaceful. Of course, this answer infuriates Joseph, who has experienced the ultimate in rivalry and betrayal through such “brotherhood.” “Just as I said, you are belligerents,” Joseph replies. But it is through the healing of this great rift that ultimately Israel is to try and become the “brotherliest” of peoples. From this episode our Torah teaches us how to cultivate forgiveness and forbearance and to take responsibility for each member of our people as if he were our brother. We are to teach all our people and the world to be models of brotherly love. As the Psalmist writes (Ps. 133:1): “How wonderful and pleasant it is when brothers dwell yet together!”



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Shabbat Mikkets-Rosh Hodesh-Hanukkah

December 19-20, 2025 | 30 Kislev, 5786

SCHEDULE

Kaplan: Parasha: 200 Rosh Hodesh: 814 (28: 9-15) Hanukkah: 696 (7: 42-47) Haftarah: 1360 (& 1266 v1; 1268 v23; 1262 v18; 1264 v42)
Hertz: Parasha: 155 Rosh Hodesh: 695 (28: 9-15) Hanukkah: 599 (7: 42-47) Haftarah: 987 (& 944 v1; 947 v23; 948 v18; 950 v42)

Candle Lighting | 4:13 pm

Evening Services | 4:15 pm | Main Sanctuary

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

Zemirot | 8:15 am / **Shahrit** | 9:00 am | Main Sanctuary

Tot Shabbat | 10:00 am | Fidanque Youth Room

Jr. Congregation | 10:30 am | Little Synagogue

Rabbi Soloveichik’s Semi-centennial Lecture | following services

Kiddush | following the lecture | *Sponsored in honor of Baruch-Lev Kelman - see inside for full listings*

Shabbat Afternoon Class | 3:30 pm | Rabbi Soloveichik

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

Evening Services | 4:10 pm

Habdala & Lighting of 7 Candles | after 4:58 pm

Hanukkah Lighting & Service Times

Date	# of Candles	Candle Lighting	Morning Services	Evening Services
Sun, Dec 21	8	4:32 pm	8:05 am	4:15 pm

Weekday Service Times

Mornings:

Sunday & Thursday (December 25): 8:05 am | Monday-Wed & Friday: 7:05 am

Evenings:

Sunday-Thursday: 4:15 pm

IN CELEBRATION OF THE US SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL

And 250 Years of Jewish Life in the United States



Rabbi Soloveichik's Major Lectures

THIS 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.

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.

SHABBAT HANUKKAH KIDDUSH SPONSORS

In honor of Baruch-Lev Kelman, our Hanukkah Hero

Sufganiya Sponsors:

Dr. Meredith Case & Aaron Nathan

Sondra & Arnold Rosen

Squintennial Supporters:

Anonymous

Sonja Lang

Solomon Family

Warren Stern

Me'ah Machers:

Alfandary-Nahon family

Malka & Rev. Z. Edinger

Faith Fogelman

McCoy-Haberman family

David Lerner

Tikva & Irwin Ostrega

Barry, Caryn, and Charles Pomerantz

Rima Raynes

Sasson family

Daniela Weiss & Avi Yohanoff

(as of 12/18)

COMING UP

Details and registration at 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.

Register at wsisny.org.

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)

FAITH FOR FOOD

Learn more at shearithisrael.org/giving/faith-for-food

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@masbiarelieff.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.

KIDS KORNER

Youth Riddle of the Week

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

*I stand a bit taller, I'm set apart just so,
I light all the others with a warm, steady glow.*

*Though not counted among them, I help each flame bask—
Who am I?*

Parent-Child Learning

Bonding time for children and (grand)parents on select Saturday nights

Next session: January 10 | 6:15 pm | with Dalya & Jake