

Joseph's Return to Trust and Faith in Judah and Israel

What exactly is it that Judah says which finally makes Joseph break down? Interestingly, Judah never per se confesses for having suggested that Joseph be sold. It's actually quite remarkable the way Judah describes Joseph's disappearance in this Parasha: He quotes what **his father Jacob said about Joseph** "You know that my wife bore me two – one went away, and I said 'he has surely been torn to pieces, and I have not seen him since.'" Although it can be argued that this speech shows that Judah truly repented for selling Joseph, we find here no explicit confession from Judah for having sold his brother. Rather, Judah here seems to be continuing the same narrative the brothers gave about Joseph in the previous Parasha, that their twelfth brother "is not there (42:13)." That expression is ambiguous: It seems to imply that Joseph is dead, but doesn't say it outright, avoiding an explicit lie; their brother is somehow just "gone." Here too, it's quite glaring how Judah implies that Joseph is dead, but avoids saying what actually happened and avoids an outright lie (Judah doesn't say that he himself believes Joseph to be dead, when Judah himself knows there's a very good chance he could be alive in slavery somewhere in Egypt), rather quoting **what his father Jacob had said** about Joseph likely being dead. Hence it seems that it was not Judah's explicit confession of his remorse for his role in instigating and carrying out the sale of his brother which makes Joseph break down.

Of course, it could be argued that circumstances here and even later would not have allowed for a fuller admission of guilt, and that his was as close to an admission which could have been expected at the time. Only at the very end of Genesis, once Jacob has died, do the brothers ask formally for forgiveness from Joseph. And although there they do admit their sin against Joseph, there they actually engage in an outright lie, telling Joseph that their father Jacob had explicitly asked him to forgive them! The ostensible reason for the outright lie there, as well as the half-truths about Joseph's disappearance earlier, would seem to be the same: The brothers' fear of arousing up old angers and arousing wrath and retribution from as powerful a figure as Joseph. Better to let sleeping dogs lie! (which my AI defines as: "Best to leave a situation alone, especially if it's calm or settled, because interfering could stir up trouble, re-ignite old conflicts, or make things worse, advice against bringing up past problems or sensitive issues. It's about maintaining peace by not disturbing dormant conflicts). Indeed, I believe that when Judah says in the first verse of our Parasha "for you are even as Pharaoh" he indicates the extreme fear of Joseph which the brothers were under and how sensitively and diplomatically Joseph needed to be addressed. Hence an outright confession and asking for forgiveness was completely out of the question.

But what **explicitly** arouses Joseph's compassion towards his brothers and his break down into tears and reconciliation in our Parasha is Judah's feelings and concern for his father Jacob. This was combined, as well, with Judah's mention of Jacob's emotional connection with Benjamin, Joseph's full brother, which was such a "soul-to-soul" connection that Jacob was liable to die if he were separated from Benjamin. Judah had perhaps had little concern with what Joseph's disappearance was going to do to his father – little concern with what Joseph's disappearance would do for the unity of the family and incipient nation of Israel. But now Judah realized that they all must stand together in family solidarity and brotherly unity and not sell out one brother for the sake of the others. Also, Jacob's concern for and connection to Joseph's full-brother Benjamin reminded Joseph about how much he, Joseph, still meant to Israel, that Joseph also was still connected to Jacob and to all of Israel in a "soul-to-soul" connection like Benjamin, and that without Joseph Israel was permanently reduced to severe mourning, "half-dead," as it were. Judah's newfound loyalty to his father Israel and with the rest of the brothers, including his potential rival Benjamin, and Israel's continued caring, loyalty, and faithfulness to his lost favorite son Joseph are what ultimately inspired Joseph's turn back to his brothers in compassion and a renewal of trust and faith.



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Shabbat Vayiggash

December 26-27, 2025 | 7 Tebet, 5786

SCHEDULE

Hertz: Parasha: 169 | Haftarah: 178

Kaplan: Parasha: 222 | Haftarah: 1086

Candle Lighting | 4:17 pm

Evening Services | 4:15 pm | Main Sanctuary

Friday Night Lights will return next week.

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: Liliane Marks, in honor of the birth of a grandson, Phoenix Joseph, born in September to Alexandra Brinicky Marks & Lionel Victor Marks*

Shabbat Afternoon Class | 3:30 pm | Baruch-Lev Kelman

Teen Shiur will return next week.

Evening Services | 4:15 pm

Habdala | 5:02 pm

The choir will return on January 9-10.

Weekday Service Times

Mornings:

Sunday & Thursday (January 1*): 8:05 am

Monday-Wednesday & Friday: 7:05 am

Evenings:

Sunday & Monday: 4:15 pm | Tuesday (Fast of Tebet**): 4:00 pm

Wednesday & Thursday: 4:30 pm

**Our office will be closed for the legal holiday.*

***See inside for the full Fast of Tebet schedule.*

IN CELEBRATION OF THE US SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL

And 250 Years of Jewish Life in the United States



Rabbi Soloveichik's Major Lectures

Next Installment:

Shabbat, January 17

After Morning Services

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.

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.

FAST OF (THE TENTH OF) TEBET

This Tuesday, December 30

Dawn (Fast Begins): 6:24 am

Morning Service: 7:05 am

Minha (with Tefillin) & Arbit: 4:00 pm

End of Fast: 4:58 pm

COMING UP

Sunday Matinee Virtual Film Festival with Sisterhood

Film Discussions on Select Sundays | Registration at shearithisrael.org

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

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

KIDS KORNER

Youth Riddle of the Week

*I wore a crown in Egypt's land,
Ruled by the Nile with royal command.
Kings and queens would bow and say,
Who was the ruler in charge each day?*

Parent-Child Learning

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

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

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

We bid a fond farewell and extend our thanks to our longtime Tot Shabbat leader, **Liz Rios**, and wish her all the best on her retirement. We look forward to seeing Liz on holidays and other special occasions as she continues to serve in an "emeritus" status.

In the Press

Read on our Press page at shearithisrael.org/press

- **"How the Bible Helped Smash the Crown"** - For this month's installment of its 250th series, the Free Press features an article by Rabbi Soloveichik describing the role of the Bible in American revolutionary thought.
- **Book Review: *Jewish Roots of American Liberty*** - Rick Richman of The Wall Street Journal reviews this new book that contains an essay by Rabbi Soloveichik.

Early Bird Offer: **Pre-Pay Next Year's Dues at This Year's Rates!**
Members, remember that **until January 15**, you can pre-pay your July 2026-June 2027 dues at this membership year's rates. Refer to our emails for instructions.