DEBAR TORAH *by* RABBI ROHDE

The Noble Graciousness Expected of a Prince of God

Key to understanding today's reading beginning with the death and burial of Sarah and ending with the death and burial of Abraham and his son Ishmael is that it is the tale of the establishment of the noble dynasty of a potentate. This is made particularly clear by the choice of the Prophetic reading complementing this section, which describes the confirmation of Solomon as the successor to King David, thus establishing the Davidic Dynasty. The section begins with not any ordinary type of death and interment but by the formal purchase of a sepulcher, a royal tomb, for a Royal House. Indeed, the "Hittites" with whom Abraham negotiates recognize him as a "Prince of God." Everything the Bible tells about Abraham is meant to evoke the sense of the noble grace and courtly dignity and etiquette expected from a proper and worthy potentate. And indeed Abraham, having been the first chosen for this nobility as Vassal to God Himself, must exemplify the utmost in what was expected in courtly grace and dignity. Some of what was expected at that time we might take offense to during later eras, such as Abraham's sending off of his concubines and their children, but they were an accepted part of the courtly culture of their time. And Abraham is depicted as dispatching even these duties with noble dignity (unlike King David), sending off each with a gracious gift.

I tend to interpret all of the stories told here as meaning to be idealizations of noble dignity and courtly grace rather than as actual guides to conduct. The story of Eliezer finding a wife for Isaac is rather fantastic. No one could or should think about acquiring a wife in such a way. It might indeed have happened that way once, but like many tales of romance and love, its purpose is to expound a type of gracious, noble, and romantic ideal in love and behavior. Rebecca, even at her early age, is a gracious, energetic, kind, and welcoming hostess. And she has great faith in God's miraculous ways. Most traditional romances were told about the nobility; life in the real world among the common people, or even among the less noble, was far less gracious. Even Solomon was told by David to execute his half-brothers, although he should "graciously" wait until his father was buried and mourned to do so. I have often remarked upon how modern conceptions of romance and love erroneously try to judge modern relationships against unduly idealized standards which always were "fairy tales," even for ancient nobility. If we listen carefully to the narrative we can easily find plenty of clues that even Sarah and Abraham didn't get along, in the sending away of Ishmael as well as the years they seem to have spent with Abraham in Beersheba and Sarah in Hebron. And in Isaac's favoring of Esau and Rebecca's favoring of Jacob, we find that the "perfect fit" as a wife for Isaac which Eliezer was vouchsafed by God must not have been so perfect after all.

And yet models of noble grace, romance, etiquette and behavior do have a place as ideals to be strived for. Although we should all eschew snobbery and not expect real life to measure up to anywhere near that standard, nobility and grace in conduct, trying to elevate ourselves to a level worthy of Divine Princely status, to evince conduct fit for a vassal of God, is a proper aim.

CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL
The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Shabbat Haye Sarah

November 6-7, 2026 | 27 Marheshvan, 5787

Scholars-in-Residence:
Professors Lynn & Alexander Kaye

SCHEDULE

Hertz: Parasha: 80 | Haftarah: 90
Kaplan: Parasha: 100 | Haftarah: 1066

Candle Lighting | 4:29 pm
Evening Services | 4:30 pm | Main Sanctuary
Scholar-in-Residence | following services | Prof. Lynn Kaye | "Assessing the Value of Time in Halakha"

Zemirot | 8:15 am / **Shahrit** | 9:00 am | Main Sanctuary
Tot Shabbat & Youth 5+ | 10:00 am | Fidanque Youth Room
Jr. Congregation | 10:30 am | Little Synagogue
Scholar-in-Residence | following services | Prof. Lynn Kaye | "Lay People's Voices & Advocacy in Rabbinic Courts of the Talmud"
Kiddush | *Kiddush & wine sponsored by Ellie Neustein & Elijah Kochin, in honor of the birth of their daughter, Sophia Bar Kochin* | *Kiddush supporters in honor of Professors Lynn & Alexander Kaye: Esme & Roger Berg; Yael Cycowicz & Matthew Kaplan; David Lerner*

Teen Shiur with Sephardic Shabbaton | 3:30 pm | Baruch-Lev Kelman
Shabbat Afternoon Class with our Scholars-in-Residence | 3:40 pm | Prof. Alexander Kaye | "Halakha and Democracy in Israel"
Evening Services | 4:25 pm
Habdala | 5:14 pm

Rosh Hodesh Kislev begins on Monday night.

Weekday Service Times

Mornings:
Sunday: 8:05 am | Monday-Friday: 7:05 am
Evenings:
Sunday **(Minha & Arbit): 4:30 pm**
Monday-Thursday **(Arbit only): 6:30 pm**

THANKSGIVING AT SHEARITH ISRAEL

*Learn more at **shearithisrael.org***

Thursday Morning, November 26

7:30-8:15 am | **Morning Services including Special Thanksgiving Hallel**
Following Morning Services | **Rabbi Soloveichik's Thanksgiving Address in the Main Sanctuary**
8:30-11:00 am | **Children's Parade Viewing on the Portico**
9:00-11:00 am | **Faith for Food Pack-A-Thon on Paved Paradise**

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Faith for Food 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. With the help of **Masbia**, we pack over a thousand nutritious food packages for those in need, and Masbia distributes them, free of charge, right to those who need them.

NEW THIS YEAR: At last year's Pack-A-Thon, we announced *Faith for Food,* Masbia's UWS Food Annex at Shearith Israel. It's been going strong, feeding about 300 people every week. This Faith for Food Pack-A-Thon will have two special enhancements in addition to the regular Pack-A-Thon:

- Pack-A-Thon Volunteers will also prepare packages for *Faith for Food* that will be stored in the Masbia Relief Annex and used by clients for future pickups.
- After the Pack-A-Thon ends, Faith for Food Food Annex clients will be invited to come to Shearith Israel to be served a special Thanksgiving Day meal-to-go.

Help us meet our goal of $25,000 and
feed thousands of struggling families!
Again this year, all contributions (up to $10,000) will be matched.
DONATE OR REGISTER TODAY!

2026 Children's Thanksgiving Parade Viewing

Thursday, November 26 | 8:30 am-11:00 am | Register today!

Our Portico provides one of the best Thanksgiving Parade views in NYC, exclusively for kids!
Admission: **FREE** for Shearith Israel member children
$60 for non-member children
Additionally, Pack-A-Thon donors at the $180 level and above can register up to 2 people for free, and donors at $360 and above can register up to 4.

COMING UP

*Learn more at **shearithisrael.org***

Sunday Matinee with Sisterhood

6th Annual Virtual Film Festival

First Film Discussion: Sunday, Nov 15 | 4 pm | *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*

This year's special lineup will feature four films of the late Arthur Cohn, hosted by his son, Emanuel Cohn, an Israeli film lecturer, actor and screenwriter, who has inspired and delighted us with his insights and interactive discussion over the past several years. Films will be sent to registrants to be viewed at their leisure. Then we will come together on Zoom to discuss the featured film with our host. Sign up now to get the film link!

Shearith Israel & The League Go To Broadway: *Here There Are Blueberries* + Exclusive Talkback

Thursday, December 3 | 7:00 pm | $149 Group Rate Tickets
Limited availability - sign up today!

The League has reserved orchestra seats for our group for this riveting Broadway play based on true events surrounding the discovery of a remarkable Holocaust-era photo album. Hailed as "the greatest detective story ever told," the production is followed by an exclusive talkback for our group with production insiders.

KIDS KORNER

To win a raffle ticket at kiddush, find Jake with the answer to this riddle:
At the well, I offered water to drink,
Then helped the camels, quicker than you'd think.
My kindness showed the servant what to do,
Who am I, the bride of Isaac, chosen and true?

Season Premiere: Parent Child Learning: Siddur Decorating

NEXT Sat night, Nov 14 | 6:30 pm | Dalya & Jake | Free; registration required

Join us for the first session of the season! Spend special time learning, creating, and connecting with Dalya and Jake as we dive into the world of tefillah. Everyone will decorate their very own Siddur covers for the Siddur booklets we use every week in Jr. Congregation. Come ready to learn, decorate, and make your siddur uniquely yours! Pizza will be served.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

This Shabbat, we welcome:
Our Scholars-in-Residence, **Dr. Lynn Kaye & Rabbi Dr. Alexander Kaye,** and **Sephardic High School Shabbaton participants** from all over the country.

This week, Rabbi Soloveichik is spending Shabbat at Touro Synagogue with our friends at Congregation Ahavath Israel.