

The Practical Doer as Leader vs. Righteous Feelings of the Proper Heir

The story of the selling of Joseph into slavery interweaves two rather conflicting accounts into one, with the versions of events still distinguishable. According to the first, the brothers were plotting to put Joseph to death by casting him into a deep pit and abandoning him there. It's not clear in the first version whether the intention was to toss Joseph's corpse into the pit after murdering him with their hands, or just cast him alive into a wet cistern or well and let night-time hypothermia or starvation finish him off. But in any case, according to this version, it is Reuben who is responsible for at least partially saving Joseph, or at least keeping him alive. Reuben tries to cool his brothers' anger, exhorting the brothers not to do anything to kill Joseph so directly. Reuben points out a nearby pit and asks that the brothers "merely" abandon Joseph in that pit. The pit into which Reuben has the brothers cast Joseph was dry and empty, perhaps shallower, and that way Reuben knew that Joseph would be temporarily safe from his brothers' violence. We are told by the narration that Reuben had intended to further save Joseph by coming back and rescuing him later, after seeing the other brothers off. However, apparently after the brothers had left and before Reuben could come back, Midianite merchants came along, according to this version, found a helpless but otherwise sound youth ensnared but alive in a dry pit, and decided to pull him out to kidnap him for sale as a slave. These Midianites, according to this version, were the ones responsible for selling Joseph into slavery in Egypt.

According to the second version of events, it was Judah who saved Joseph's life, not by exhorting the brothers not to do violence but rather by appealing to the brothers' practical side that they had nothing to gain and everything to lose by killing their brother. According to this version, caravan-traders of Ishmaelites, (not Midianites), happened by while the brothers were discussing what to do about Joseph, and Judah suggested selling Joseph to as a slave to the caravans. According to this, the brothers themselves must have taken Joseph out of the pit (if indeed he had actually been thrown into one at all). And it was the brothers who directly sold Joseph as a slave to these Ishmaelites for twenty silver pieces. The Ishmaelites then took Joseph as a slave to Egypt.

In both versions, the actions of Joseph's "savior" are flawed. Both Reuben and Judah only try to mitigate somewhat the evil done to Joseph rather than rebuking their brothers for their jealousy and evil intent. Reuben, unwilling to totally oppose his brothers, sets the stage for his failure by going along with the brothers' abandonment of Joseph in a pit –albeit a dry one – in remote pasture lands. Reuben indeed facilitated that abandonment directly by suggesting a particular pit, and hence is responsible for the aftermath, even though that was unintended by him. According to the second version, Judah spares Joseph from any actual threat to his life, but he full guilt for suggesting the sale of Joseph into slavery in the first place and then consummating the deal. And Judah convinces brothers to spare Joseph's life by arguing that killing Joseph would not profit them; not exactly a moral argument!

Both versions of the story deal with rivalries for leadership among Reuben, Judah, and Joseph. Later on in Genesis, the combining of story versions based alternatively upon Reuben and Judah as potential saviors continues. Reuben tells Jacob: "If I don't bring back Benjamin, put my two sons to death; I will be considered a sinner all my days." Very moral in feeling, but not very practical! Judah appeals to Jacob's practical side, continuing to stress that without Benjamin there can be no return to Egypt and therefore they will all starve, and eventually he prevails. Our final interwoven version sees Reuben as the failed proper heir, and Judah as his replacement as leader. Reuben is the true firstborn, and his argument may even be morally superior. But the truth, propriety, and higher morality of Reuben lose out to the practical and more politic leadership of Judah, who manages to carry out the right action, even though his motivations, his truth, and his lineage may not be so proper.



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL
The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Shabbat Vayesheb

November 26-27, 2021

SCHEDULE

Candle Lighting | 4:13 pm

Friday Evening Services | 4:15 pm

Friday Night Lights | following services | *2021-22 season sponsored by the Julis-Rabinowitz family*

Zemirot | 8:30 am

Shahrit | 9:00 am

(No Jr. Congregation this week)

Outdoor Kiddush | following services

Shabbat Afternoon Class will NOT meet this week.

Shabbat Afternoon Services | 4:10 pm

Shabbat Ends | 4:57 pm

Virtual Habdala Service | Rev. Z. Edinger | 5:15 pm

Weekday Service Times

Morning Services

Sunday: 8:05 am | Monday-Thursday: 7:05 am

Evening Services

Sunday-Thursday (Minha/Arbit): **4:15 pm**

Reminder: If you choose not to wear a mask when permissible, you represent and warrant that you are fully vaccinated. If requested, you must wear a well-fitted mask wherever and whenever required.

If you're eligible for the vaccine booster, we encourage it, and if your child is eligible to be vaccinated, we encourage that too. Once you've been boosted/vaccinated, please send vaccination proof to info@shearithisrael.org.

HANUKKAH

Shine A Light on Antisemitism!

Monday, November 29 | 5:30 - 6:30 pm | Times Square

Antisemitic incidents are increasing worldwide. This Hanukkah, join us and thousands of New Yorkers as part of a national effort to raise awareness about antisemitism with education, community partnerships, workplace engagement, and advocacy among Jewish and non-Jewish communities.

Highlights include:

- Musical performances by David Broza, The Maccabeats, The Christian Cultural Center Choir, and other special guests
- Messages of support from public officials
- Public menorah lighting & synced displays on Times Square's iconic billboards

Bring your friends. Bring your family. And, most important, bring your light!

Youth Hanukkah Lighting & Celebration

8th Night of Hanukkah, Sunday, December 5 | 4:15pm - 5:15pm

Families are invited to a Hanukkah get-together in the Paved Paradise pavilion!

4:15 - 4:20 pm: Hanukkah greetings by Rivka Wiznia

4:20 - 4:45 pm: "Glow in the Dark" art projects

4:45 - 5:15 pm: Rev. Z Edinger and Rabbi Rohde leading a spirited sing-along and Hanukkah lighting with treats

Refer to our emails for the registration link.

Shearith Israel is a proud co-sponsor of the Menemsha

2021 Virtual Hanukkah Film Festival

Begins on the first night of Hanukkah, November 28

Use our code "CSINYC" to get a 25% discount!

(\$36 instead of \$48 for the entire festival!)

Celebrate the Hanukkah season with 8 nights of award-winning new films, available to view from the comfort of your home! A new film will be released each night of Hanukkah for registered participants to view, and all films will remain available for the rest of the holiday in case you miss them.

Visit hanukkahfilmfestival.com to register and view details on all the films, and don't forget to sign up with our CSINYC discount code!

Festive Communal Candle Lighting

Each Night of Hanukkah | November 28-December 5

Join us for Hanukkah services and candle lighting of our colonial-era *hanukkiah*. You'll be rewarded with a different Hanukkah treat each night!

THIS SHABBAT

Friday Night Lights

IN PERSON, Fridays | Following Evening Services

2021-22 season sponsored by the Julis-Rabinowitz family

To sponsor a future session, visit shearithisrael.org/fnl5782.

COMING UP

Save the Date: December 22 - Blood Drive

Finish off the year by giving the gift of life at *Caring Connection's* upcoming blood drive at Shearith Israel. Follow our emails for forthcoming details.

Mapping the Genetic Identity of *Bnei Anusim*

Rediscovering a Lost Jewish Community - The Role of Genetic Research
with Dr. Karl Skorecki & Dr. Inés Nogueiro of Bar-Ilan University

Sunday, December 12 | 10:00 am | On Zoom | Register on shearithisrael.org

Dr. Karl Skorecki, Dean of Bar-Ilan University's Azrieli Faculty of Medicine in Tzfat, has opened to us a lost chapter in Jewish history - the fate of the *anusim*, Iberian Jews who were forced to convert to Catholicism in the 15th and 16th centuries.

SAVE THE DATE: Rabbi Swap Shabbat Series:

Rabbi Shaul Robinson of Lincoln Square Synagogue

Shabbat Morning, December 18

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mazal tob to **Juliana & Dr. Howard Levite**, upon the upcoming marriage of their daughter, Danielle, to Brett Levine.

Mazal tob to **Rabbi & Mrs. Lisa Rohde**, upon celebrating their 30th anniversary.

Condolences to **Dr. Jonathan Tobin**, upon the passing of his father, Dr. Mark S. Tobin.

PRESERVING PAVED PARADISE

A successful second phase of fundraising will enable us to preserve and maintain this wonderful outdoor space for years to come.

Our Phase 2 Fundraising Goal: \$150,000

To donate, visit shearithisrael.org/preserving-paved-paradise.
