A Note About Our Weekly Dibrei Torah

Our Dibrei Torah this week is written by Rabbi Joseph Dweck, Senior Rabbi of the Shabbat morning at Congregation Shearith Israel. Rabbi Dweck has been an inspiration and a leader in the Jewish community for many years. His sermons and teachings are always insightful and thought-provoking. We are grateful to have him as a part of our community.

Rabbi Joseph Dweck, Senior Rabbi of the Philadelphia Congregation Shearith Israel, has been a leader in the Jewish community for many years. His sermons and teachings are always insightful and thought-provoking. We are grateful to have him as a part of our community.

Philadelphia

Rabbi Joseph Dweck, Senior Rabbi of the S&P Sephardi Community of the United Kingdom

"We have flown the air like birds and swum the sea like fishes, but have yet to learn the simple act of walking the earth like brothers." - Martin Luther King Jr.

Each year, for four weeks, we read the saga of a family embroiled in strife, heartache and sadness. The pages of the Torah’s opening book are filled with love, betrayal, jealousy and even hatred. It would make for a very dramatic film or television drama, but as such, it also makes for important lessons about life and relationships.

The lives of our forefather Yaakov together with his wife and children are the subject of our story. One can learn a great deal about a nation from its origins and relationships are at the core of our.

While there were significant differences in philosophy within the family, those differences did not cause the struggles. It went deeper. It was the fear of not being able to share those differences in a supportive and constructive environment. It was the worry that one’s personal feelings, ideas and perspectives would be scorched rather than respected and there would be no welcoming space in which differences could be explored.

Insecurities developed from an early stage due to Yaakov having more space to play, and thus, more than one mother in the family. It is natural for the child to be the focus of attention and the other children in the family. One place where inequity was evident in the family was with Yaakov, Rachel’s son. He held a special place in his father’s heart. His brothers knew this causing their feeling of animosity to grow. Yaakov exacerbates the situation by telling his brothers of dreams and things he has been doing in which his father and brothers bow to him. Upon hearing this, animosity turns to hatred and deep rifts rip into the fabric of the family.

It may be easy to blame Yaakov for being arrogant in sharing his grandiose dreams with his brothers but is it accurate to do so? Yaakov does indeed openly chastise him for sharing them. However, his father also helps them to know that they are not to be coldly rejected.

The lesson we learn at Joseph’s life is that we miss the most important and meaningful relationships in our lives. It is an art to know and how to shield ourselves from heartache. It takes wisdom and bravery to wield it but it takes greater wisdom and bravery to know when to set it down. The midrash brothers at the close of Genesis teach us that our most glorious moments are the ones in which we choose to lower our shields and stand before each other in vulnerability with hearts unprepared for embrace.

Joseph was not perfect. But he believed that relationships and the bonds of humanity were the highest aspects of our lives. At the base of all of humanity lies the desire to love and be loved. Joseph himself is not an individual who is self-centred and insensitive to others’ feelings. On the contrary, he is a compassionate, caring and honest person. He deals with the conflict of the brothers by being in the middle and not making a choice between them. He dedicates the rest of his life to faithfully building a country that he was ordered by Pharaoh to protect.

These attributes should cause us to look again at the revelation of Joseph’s dreams and wonder if, rather than boasting, he was trying to share a personal experience with his family in the, albeit naive, expectation that among his brothers he would find a safe place in which he could experience the more intense aspects of his spiritual growth. Perhaps the soul of a boy who dreamed of not being afraid to love. The bond forged by Yehuda and Binyamin lives on in the Jewish people. Yehuda and Binyamin are the only tribes of the original twelve that survive today. The commitment to love and brotherhood over personal gain that Joseph so cared for has, in his brothers’ bond, stood the test of time.

CANDLE LIGHTING | 4:26 pm

MINIHAY | 4:30 pm | Main Sanctuary

FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS | Following evening services | Rabbi Soloveichik gives a talk on the topic “The Often Unknown Origin of Eishet Hayil” | 2016-2017 season sponsored by the July Family

ZEMIROT | 8:15 am | Main Sanctuary

SHARHAT (NISHMAT) | 9:00 am | Rabbi Soloveichik delivers a shiru on the topic “The Most Important Invention in Human History”

TOT SHABBAT WITH LIZ AND SHAHANE | Ages 0-4 | 10:00 am | Levy Auditorium

YOUTH GROUPS WITH RACHEL | Ages 5-12 | 10:00 am | Elias Room

JR. CONGREGATION WITH TORAH READING | Ages 5-12 | 10:30 am | Little Synagogue

KIDDUSH | Levy Auditorium | Sponsored by Rachel Brudy and Michael Lustig in honor of Rabbi Ira Robine in appreciation for all he does for our youth in preparing to become brats and bat mitzvah. Kiddush contribu- tor: Sam De Simoni in memory of her mother, Manjish Merad (Rabbi bat Sara s’Avraham), on 11 months since her passing.

SEUDAH SHELISHIT AND PIRKE ABOT AFTERNOON SHIR | Rabbi Soloveichik | 3:30 pm | Levy Auditorium | Fall semester sponsored by Lewis Lipsey

MINIHAY/ARBIT | 4:20 PM

HABDALAT | 5:12 pm

CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL

The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Shabbat Vayigash

January 6-7, 2017

Hertz Pentateuch p. 169 | Hafzarah p. 178
Kaplan Living Torah p. 222 | Hafzarah: 1086
UPCOMING PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

Jerusalem’s Jubilee - A Three Part Lecture Series
Join us this Monday for the launch of a three part lecture series marking the calendar year in which we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the unification of this holiest city.

Part 1: Rabbi Soloveichik - This Monday, January 9 | 7:00 pm
Early American Presidents and Jerusalem: Lessons from Yesteryear for Today

Part 2: Rabbi Riskin - Next Shabbat Morning, January 14
The United City and the United Nations: The Allure and Sanctity of Jerusalem

Part 3: Rabbi Soloveichik - Shabbat Morning, January 21
The First Jewish Ruler of Jerusalem in 2000 Years: The Remarkable Story of Viscount Herbert Samuel
To sponsor this important series, go to shearithisrael.org/jerusalem_jubilee

The United City and the United Nations: The Allure and Sanctity of Jerusalem
Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Shabbat Morning, January 14 | Following morning services
Rabbi Riskin is one of the founders and the first spiritual leader of the Lincoln Square Synagogue in New York, which he led for 19 years. In 1983, at the peak of his profession, he left New York to become the rabbi of Efrat, a new Israeli city 8 miles south of Jerusalem, which he helped found and establish. Efrat is now a flourishing community of close to 12,000 people. Rabbi Riskin founded and serves as Chancellor and Rosh Yeshiva of Ohr Torah Stone Institutions, a network of over 3,000 students ranging from junior-high schools to post-graduate programs preparing the leaders for world Jewry. For sponsorship opportunities, go to shearithisrael.org/jerusalem_jubilee.

Shabbat Dinner For Teens and Their Entire Families with Rabbi Soloveichik
Friday night, January 20 | Following Friday Night Lights
Teens and their families are invited to a special Shabbat dinner with Rabbi Soloveichik and his family. Register at shearithisrael.org/teens-Hollywood.

Exclusive Tour of “The First Jewish Americans: Freedom and Culture In The New World” Exhibit
Rabbi Meir Soloveichik
The New-York Historical Society
170 Central Park West (At 77th street)
Sunday, January 29 | 11:00 am
SOLD OUT
If you are still interested in attending the tour but got shut out this time around, let us know. We are investigating the possibility of holding an additional tour on another date.
To indicate your interest, please email slandau@shearithisrael.org. Please note your name, email address, and phone number.

Incredible Kids Mega Challah Bake
Super ( Challah) Bowl Sunday, February 5 | 10:30 am
At the New York Grand Hyatt in Midtown
Shearith Israel is a proud sponsor of the upcoming Incredible Kids Mega Challah Bake. CSI Youth are invited to join children from all over New York City to get together for the Incredible Kids Mega Challah Bake. The event is the brainchild of a diverse group of Jewish moms of every style, observance, and denomination, all with one common goal: unity. The event will host approximately 1,000 Jewish children, all ready to roll up their sleeves and make their very own challah loaves. Last year, the Guinness Book of World Records was on hand to declare it the world’s largest baking event. Want to help be a part of trying to break a new record? Register at kidschallahbake.com/rsvp.

Save the Date:
Shabbat Tu B’Shevat Seder and Public Discussion
Featuring New York Times Best Selling Author:
Seth (Yossi) Siegel
Friday Night, February 10
Following Friday Night Lights
Join Rabbi Meir Soloveichik and Yossi Siegel for a special evening featuring both the seder as well as a public discussion of Yossi Siegel’s New York Times bestselling book, Let There Be Water: Israel’s Solution for a Water-Starved World.

WEEKDAY JUDAIC EDUCATION
For details go to: shearithisrael.org/judaic-education

Sunday
◊ Saadia Gaon’s Book of Beliefs and Opinions | Shimon den Hollander | 8:45 am

Monday
◊ Monday Night Learning: A Series on Early America and The Jews | Rabbi Soloveichik | 7:00 pm | Select Mondays

Tuesday
◊ Katzap Class and Breakfast | Following Morning Services
◊ Feasts and Fasts: The Festivals in Jewish Thought - A Class for Women | Rabbi Soloveichik | 9:00 am
◊ Talmud Class: Tractate Sanhedrin | Rabbi Soloveichik | 7:00 pm

Wednesday
◊ NEW: Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Shearith Israel: A Monthly Q & A | Z. Edinger | 7:00 pm | On select Wednesdays | Next class on January 25 | Email questions to zedinger@shearithisrael.org.

To sponsor a single class or an entire semester, go to shearithisrael.org/sponsoraclass

To find out when your favorite class is held, canceled or for special topics, go to shearithisrael.org/join-out-mailing-lists to select which emails you’d like to receive.

Parnas Office Hours
Louis Solomon would be delighted to meet with you. Please schedule a visit at parnas@shearithisrael.org.

Our next public tour is:
Wednesday, January 11 at 11:00 am

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mazal Tov to Rivka and Marc Wiznia
on the birth of a son.

Welcome New Members Meryl Schlussel and Joseph Mark to the Shearith Israel family.