DEBAR TORAH UNION OF OPPOSITES
— BY HAZZAN RABBI IRA ROHDE

...For שלמות (perfection or wholeness of character) is not perceptible in man except when he possesses two opposite ממידות [characters], such as the trait of mercy and cruelty. For when a man behaves according to one trait, one need not necessarily say that he is Righteous, but rather there is to say that such is his nature. But when he possesses two opposite characters such as mercy [as well as] cruelty, then it is not permitted to say that he is a Righteous Person. And this is why it says here at the ממידות [Binding of Isaac] for now I know that you fear God. For before this he was very merciful, inviting guests and doing kindnesses. But the character of cruelty and compelling him to fulfill the command of the Creator, Blessed be He, was not yet evident in him, and it would have been possible to claim that Abraham was not completely Righteous. Heaven forfend. But at the ממידות [Binding], when he demonstrated the trait of cruelty, that he wanted with all desire of his soul to fulfill the command of the Creator and slaughter his one and only son upon whom all his expectations depended—if so, now his completeness of [character] is evident, and it was apparent that he was Completely Righteous." (Rabbi Eliezer, Commentary on the Torah by the Vilna Gaon, Parashat Vayera).

This comment on the Binding of Isaac by the Vilna Gaon was pointed out to me by my late teacher, Dr. Walter Wurzburger, z”l. It strikes a rather Kierkegaardian, perhaps even fundamentalistic, chord. Prof. Yeshayahu Leibowitz strikes a similar tone, saying: "This love was the virtue of Abraham, and because of this it was said of him, 'and he believed in God.' It is what he proved in the Akedah by accepting the yoke of the service of God, even though no 'advantage,' in the sense of the satisfaction of a need, or any imaginable reward could accrue from it...The duties of faith take precedence over all human needs, interests, and values, even those of the divine promises embodied in victory for the future (the rejection of the Covenant of the Pieces). That the command of God must be followed at times fideistically, brushing aside all other concerns, moral or otherwise, in submission to the will of God, is the interpretation of the Akedah given by several schools of commentary. But I noticed that that isn't all the Vilna Gaon is saying here. The Gaon is not saying that Abraham is just demonstrating his submission to the inscrutable will of God. More is on going on here about Abraham's overcoming himself and the love of his son in submission to God's will. Rather, the Gaon is saying that the Akedah is there to demonstrate, actualize or develop a particular type of perfection of Abraham's character. Real perfection of character indeed requires the ability to manage and use all the extremes of character. And it is not a matter of simply following the "Golden Mean" between all of the extreme traits, only going to extremes to fight a natural tendency and restore balance. No, what is called for in the development of the human personality is nothing short of a "Union of Opposites." We all have many and diverse roles to play, which call for the development and taking of opposite positions. We must at the same time develop the capacity to be strong as well as yielding, both courageous and fearful, kind as well as, when need be, cruel. We have to be, often at the same time, encouraging and enthusiastic as well as prudent and critical. Our integrity must be organic; not the fixed defining of a mean between two extremes, but rather embracing opposing dispositions in a dynamic dialectic. We are in need of God's objective perspective, expressed in Torah, to guide us in the proper circumstances and proportions in which to cultivate and express each trait. Only in this way can we aspire to the complete "wholeness" שלמות of righteous character exemplified by our forefather Abraham.

CANDLES LIT AT HAVDALAH 5:15 pm

MINHAG & ARBIT | 5:30 pm | Main Sanctuary

Hertz Pentateuch: p. 63; Haftarah p. 76
Kaplan Living Torah: p. 78; Haftarah p. 1060

Friday Night Lights will return next week.

ZEMIROT | 8:15 pm
SHAHARIT (NISHMAT) | 9:00 am
TOT SHABBAT WITH LIZ AND SHANADE | Ages 0-4 | 10:00 am | Levy Auditorium
YOUTH GROUPS WITH RACHEL | Ages 5-12 | 10:00 am | Eliax Room
JUNIOR CONGREGATION | Ages 5-12 | 1:00 pm | Little Synagogue
KIDDUSH | Levy Auditorium | Sponsored by Renen Korin, in memory of his mother, Tzipporah Korin.

Sefida Shelishfet & Shabbat Afternoon Shur will return next week.

MINHAG & ARBIT | 5:25 pm
HARDELAI | 6:18 pm

Best wishes for an enjoyable and instructive trip to the participants who are joining Rabbi Soloveichik on this weekend's shabbaton to Charleston. We also thank them for their extra generosity; their donations help us provide the many classes and programs we often offer to the public at no charge throughout the year.

Remember to turn your clocks back one hour on Saturday night.

Weekday Service Times
Mornings: Sunday: 8:00 am
Monday - Friday: 7:15 am
Evenings (Arbit Only): Sunday - Thursday: 6:30 pm

Central Park West at 70th Street, New York City • www.shearithisrael.org
THANKSGIVING AT SHEARITH ISRAEL
Morning Services with our Special Thanksgiving Hallel | Main Sanctuary | 7:45 am
Rabbi Soloveichik’s Address | Main Sanctuary
Children’s Hesed Craft Activity (during the Rabbi’s Address) | starting 8:30 am
Hot Cocoa & Refreshments | Elias Room | 9:00-11:00 am
Parade Viewing for Youth | Portico
Hunger Alleviation Pack-a-thon (registration required) 9:30–11:30 am | Levy Auditorium

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SPONSOR OUR THANKSGIVING FESTIVITIES? Visit shearithisrael.org/thanksgiving.

THIRD ANNUAL THANKSGIVING PACK-A-THON
Thursday, November 23, 9:30 am | Levy Auditorium
Building on the success of the past two Pack-a-thons, this year we have expanded our circle of UWS faith community partners to include our founding partner, the West End Collegiate Church, The Jewish Center, and, this year, the Church of Latter-day Saints.

We are also delighted to announce that, like last year, every dollar you donate to this initiative will be TRIPLED through the generosity of an anonymous matching grant.

Help us reach our goal of $18,000 and register to participate or donate at shearithisrael.org/pack-a-thon-2017.

REGISTER NOW: Young Couples and Families Luncheon Shabbat, November 25 | Following Morning Services Young couples and families are invited to a Thanksgiving Weekend Shabbat Lunch with Rabbi and Layaliza Soloveichik & Co. Join us for a family-friendly afternoon of Torah and good company. For registration and sponsorship details, visit shearithisrael.org/thanksgiving-luncheon

Are You Ready for the NYC Marathon? 
This Sunday, November 5
Be aware of heightened security and street closures that will affect access to the synagogue on Marathon Sunday. Minyan, Sunday Classes, and PTTS are running as usual; plan your commutes accordingly. The B/C subway exit at W. 70th St. may be closed off and we advise you to avoid Central Park West and access our street via Columbus Avenue.

Best of luck to Samuel Neumark, who will be running in the Marathon! If you know of other members who are running, let us know by Sunday—we’d like to congratulate them too. Send names to rosenberg@shearithisrael.org.

FROM THE DISTRIBUTOR THAT BROUGHT YOU “THE WOMEN’S BALCONY”
The Film Critics are Calling a “Must-See” and a “Masterpiece” “1945”
Now playing at Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, with a special screening to be held at Shearith Israel, on an upcoming date to be announced.

On a summer day in 1945, an Orthodox man and his grown son arrive in a small village in Hungary while the villagers prepare for the wedding of the town clerk’s son. The townspeople—suspicious, remorseful, fearful, and cunning—expect the worst and behave accordingly. A superb ensemble cast, lush black and white cinematography, and historically detailed art direction contribute to this eloquent drama.

Shearith Israel Toddler Program
We’ve barely felt a nip in the air, but now is the time to think about Spring enrollment. To learn more and apply, go to shearithisrael.org/toddlerprogram.

A Major History Lecture Marking the 100th Anniversary of the Balfour Declaration THIS Thursday, November 9 | 7:00 pm

“Jew vs. Jew: The Battle Over the Balfour Declaration”
Rabbi Meir Soloveichik
Co-Sponsored by the Strauss Center for Torah and Western Thought

To join our list of sponsors, visit shearithisrael.org/balfour

Hebra Hased Va’Amet Screening of No. 17 is Anonymous Sunday, November 19 | 4:00 pm
Join the Heb for this special screening of this Israeli documentary, set in the aftermath of a suicide bombing that killed 17 on a bus, in which all but one of the victims were identified. The filmmakers document the search to identify the man no one had reported missing.

The film runs 75 minutes, and is in Hebrew with English subtitles.

The screening will be followed by a discussion led by psychiatrist and Shearith Israel member, Dr. Rebecca Chaplan (Nathan). Childcare will be available and light refreshments will be served. This event is FREE thanks to the Heb’s sponsorship, though registration is encouraged (and required for childcare). Donations to the Heb are welcome.

Visit shearithisrael.org/Anonymous17 to sign up.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS
Condolences to Ruth Kobrin, on the passing of her brother, Stephen L. Freedman.