At the Southern border of Canaan with Egypt, near Gaza — This is, after all, the shortest and most direct route from Egypt to Canaan. Nahum Sarna and others suggest that based on an alternate reading of Exod. 13:17-18, Goren ha'Asa'ad is identified with Beth Jigdeyn in the South of Israel. This is the well-known site of Tell el-Fajer, a major Egyptian center during the late Bronze age and extremely close to Deir el Balah — which was a center of Egyptian burial practices in Canaan. In 1993, Aaron Demsky posited that Abul Mazaitz in cognate with Nahal Mazitnir (i.e. the stream of Egypt) and is identifiable as the southern border of Canaan also known as Nahal Be'or (near Gaza). Demsky also suggested that "beyond the Jordan" doesn’t refer to the Jordan River, but rather a city called Jordan in the Negeb which is written as yowled in the Pharaoh Shoshenq I’s topographical list from the 11th c. BCE, and later mentioned by Josephus in the first century CE, and still later in a Christian Syriac source.

The Torah goes out of its way to tell us the original name, general location, and what the locals called the place where Jacob was exiled. Whenever this location was actually located, Jacob’s seven day funeral was a major event—not only for the Children of Israel, but also for Egypt, and indeed for the entire region.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mazal tov to Mata Frieder, upon becoming a Bat Mitzvah.

Mazal tov to Jacob Neumark upon his marriage to Jannah Eichenbaum. Congratulations as well to his parents, Susan & Avery Neumark.

Condolescence to Roberto Salama upon the passing of his father, Ricardo (Ezra) Salama.

Condolescence to Isaac Schlessinger upon the passing of his father, Shlomo (Sidney) Schlessinger.

LOCATING GOREN HA'ASAD: WHERE DID JACOB’S FUNERAL TAKE PLACE?

— Z. Edinger, Shamash—

Gen. 50:7-9: So Joseph went up to bury his father; and with him went up all the officials of Pharaoh, the senior members of his court, and all of Egypt’s dignitaries, (8) together with all of Joseph’s household, his brothers, and his father’s household... (9) Chariots, too, and horsesmen went up with him; it was a very large troop. (10) When they came to Goren ha’Asad, which is beyond the Jordan, they held there a very great and solemn lamentation; and he observed a mourning period of seven days for his father. (11) And when the Canaanite inhabitants of the land saw the mourning at Goren ha’Asad, they said, “This is a solemn mourning on the part of the Egyptians.” That is why it was named Abul Mazaitz, which is beyond the Jordan.

This description of the location of Jacob’s funeral ceremony contains several unassailable, ambiguous, or problematic elements:

- Goren ha’Asad literally means the "steadfast floor of the ramropest.
- This term normally (but not exclusively) refers to the East Bank of the Jordan River, i.e. the Transjordan.
- If this is the case, then Jacob’s funeral ceremony took a very strange and circuitous route, not travelling along the direct route up the coast (i.e. wadi selama) but rather crossing across the Negeb, up the plains of Moab into the Transjordan, stopping at Goren ha’Asad for seven days, and then crossing the Jordan river over Caanan in order to bury Jacob at Machpelah near Hebron. Moreover, verse 11 indicates that the location of Goren ha’Asad in Caanan, how could it both be in Canaan and also be "beyond the Jordan"?

Abul Mazaitz - Verse 11 also gives us an ancient etymology of the name of a place called Abul Mazaitz. In doing so the Torah links this place with the mourning ceremonies for Jacob. But the word Abul (and the whole phrase) is not actually connected linguistically to the word for mourning (תָּרָע). Abul refers to a stream or meadow, and there are several place names in the Bible using this term (Abul Bar Makkad 1 Sam 20:18; Abul Shaniy Nuzm. 25:1; Abul Claud, 11:33; Abul Mabana, 2 Kings 4:12; Abul Maein, 2 Chronicles 16:8). One must therefore be careful to record the place name Abul with a yamam and not with a zayin, thus retaining the meaning of stream/meadow even as the verse connects this name with mourning.

Based on these ambiguities several different locations have been proposed for the location of Jacob’s funeral and the place called Goren ha’Asad:

In the Transjordan — Our verses state more than once that the location was in the Transjordan which normally would mean the eastern bank of the Jordan River. This is the opinion of the medieval commentator of Sefer Teil (12th c. Italy). Critical bible scholars of the 20th century go as far as to claim that Jacob was buried in Jordan! G.J. Davies has suggested that the archaological site of Tel el Sofidjahin Jordan, at which a large complex of Egyptian burials were found, is the likeliest site for the biblical Abul Mazaitz.

The Jordan Rift Valley (West Bank) either near the Egyptian center of Beth Shan or, following Exod. 13:17-18, Beth Jigdeyn (at Jericho), which was the road to Beth Shan. Or, following Exod. 13:17-18, Beth Jigdeyn (at Jericho), which was the road to Beth Shan.

Yehuda & Yoel Elitzur offer another identification, and suggest that wadi selama could be a metathesis of מָרָע and refer to the Arab region (Ever ha’Asad) from Arav ha’Tarum, cf. II Sam. 15:28. (continued on side panel)
A Community Dinner featuring
Rabbi Meir Soloveichik in Conversation with
Professor Yaacob Dweck
Join Rabbi Soloveichik and Princeton Professor Yaacob Dweck, as they discuss Professor Dweck’s new book:
Dissident Rabbi: The Life of Jacob Sasportas.
The book, recently released by Princeton Press, tells the story of Jacob Sasportas, the Sephardic rabbi who spent the final years of his life as the spiritual leader of the Amsterdam Jewish community. He alone challenged Sabbetai Zevi’s improbable messianic claims and warned his fellow Jews that their Messiah was not the answer to their prayers.
To register or sponsor, visit shearithisrael.org/sasportas-dinner.

RESCHEDULED: Teen Bowling & Pizza
Sunday, January 26 | 6:00 pm
Bowlmor Times Square, 222 W. 44th St
Shearith Israel teens are invited to bring their friends for a fun night of bowling and pizza at Bowlmor Lanes. Just $20 includes bowling, shoe rental, pizza and unlimited beverages. If you are interested in this or future outings, contact Francine Alfordany (falphandary@yahoo.com).
To register, visit shearithisrael.org/teen-bowling.

WAIT-LIST ONLY
Mark Twain In the Holy Land
Sunday, February 2 | 11:30 am & 12:30 pm
New-York Historical Society
Join Rabbi Meir Soloveichik for a tour on the final day of the New-York Historical Society’s exhibit on Twain’s trip through the Mediterranean.
This event is currently sold out, but if you would like to be added to the waitlist, contact Sarah Gross at sgross@shearithisrael.org.

UPCOMING SISTERSHIST PROGRAMMING
SPACE IS LIMITED—REGISTER TODAY!
Tambourine Workshop
Sunday, March 1 | 10:00 am-12:00 pm
Firm Registration Deadline: Sunday, January 26
Women and teenage girls are invited to a multi-faceted & inspirational tambourine workshop. Connect with Miriam the Prophetess and the righteous women who left Egypt together with her. Plant seeds of courage and faith as we adorn our instruments! Rejoice with friends and neighbors as we celebrate our precious sisterhood!
Miriam Liebermann, MSW, author, community activist, and inspirational speaker, will conduct the workshop and then lead a song and dance.
Artistic talent is not necessary! Stencils will be provided.
Charge for Admission: $25 for adult women, $20 for teen girls
Register at shearithisrael.org/tambourine.

Stitch & Fix
Bi-Monthly on Sundays & Tuesdays | 10am-12pm
Elias Room
Next sessions: Sunday, Feb. 9 | Tuesday, Feb. 11
Join the Sisterhood’s Sewing Circle: drop in, select an item from our synagogue vestments that needs mending, then stitch and fix. For questions, contact Rose Edinger at rgedinger@gmail.com.

RABBI SOLOVEICHIK’S UPCOMING MAJOR LECTURES

More Jewish Education 5780

- Friday Night Lights | Rabbi Soloveichik
  Friday Nights | Following Evening Services
- Shabbat Afternoon Class | Rabbi Soloveichik
  Shabbat Afternoons | One hour before Minha (but never earlier than 3:30 pm)
- The Guide to the Duties of the Heart | Rabbi Sjimon den Hollander
  Sunday Mornings | 8:45 am
- The Idea of Kingship | Rabbi David Silber
  Sunday Mornings | 10:00 am | Begins February 2 | $250 cost, but FREE for Shearith Israel members | Registration details at shearithisrael.org/idea-kingship
- Tuesday Morning Women’s Class | Rabbi Soloveichik
  Tuesdays | 9:00 am | Sign up for weekly reminders at shearithisrael.org/join-our-email-lists
- Bet Midrash | led by Steven Gotlib
  Monday-Thursday | One hour before evening services