

## DEBAR TORAH by RABBI ROHDE

### The Sin of Falseness in our Dealings with Others

*You shall not steal; you shall not deal deceitfully or falsely with one another. You shall not swear falsely by My name, profaning the name of your God: I am the LORD. You shall not swear falsely by My name, profaning the name of your God: I am the LORD. You shall not defraud your fellow [Israelite]. You shall not commit robbery. The wages of a laborer shall not remain with you until morning”*

(Lev. 19:11-13, Sefaria translation)

Is it a sin to lie, in the eyes of Judaism? A major source for a prohibition of lying is in this week's Parasha, the first line of which is often translated as “Ye shall not steal, ye shall not deny nor shall ye lie one man to another.” It is, in fact, one of the few times the Torah would seem to prohibit lying in general, that is, even when one is not under oath. And yet, in the very next verse, the Torah describes lying under oath. Now, there are times that everyone would agree that lying is sinful. Everyone would agree that lying under oath produces terrible consequences, for in court cases the truth is absolutely necessary to establish, and witnesses are called to establish and verify the truth. There are other circumstances when truth is necessary and lying must be considered sinful, and that is in many or most business transactions. Selling or paying and promising to pay under false pretenses is what we call fraud, or a fraudulent transaction. Business dealings require high degrees of trust. Although there can be some degree of haggling, and some degree of overstatement (with caveat emptor), business dealings are predicated upon a goodly amount of basic trust. A transaction made with lies about the circumstances and descriptions constitutes fraud. But although I can be accused of moral turpitude (and I must beg forgiveness if I err), I've often doubted that the Torah sees lying as a sin per se. That's one of the reasons I think Sefaria's translation at the top is correct; it avoids saying “don't lie” and substitutes “don't deal deceitfully or falsely with one another.” Of course, all of our “dealings” with one another are in some way transactions, “business dealings.” We “sell ourselves” to one another based upon our trustworthiness. And yet I would maintain that it is the “false” or “deceitful” “dealings” which are prohibited, not “lying” per se.

To be sure, honesty, straightforwardness, uprightness, transparency, and integrity are valued character traits. Vice versa, their opposite, lying, crookedness, deceptiveness, etc., are considered poor character traits. But a character flaw is not a sin per se. I should also add that the gravity of lying and faithless, deceitful behavior as well as the praise of honesty gets amplified somewhat in the Prophets, Proverbs, Psalms, and the rest of the Bible. This gets amplified all the more so in the Talmud and Rabbinic writings. And yet I must confess, with my deepest apologies to the Western Jewish moral apologists of the last three centuries, that when I hear them say Judaism defines lying as a sin, I get just a bit skeptical. (Sorry, Dennis Prager!)

But what I do think is much more prohibited is falsity in dealing with one another. The mention of this falsity is preceded by a term translated as “deceit” which really refers to “denial,” even when the truth is presented before the liar's face. This may indicate denial in court. And, by the way, the falsity and deceit may be prohibited upon both liar as well as the one who hears the lie, knows it's a lie, and allows it to pass without refutation. For, as the Ibn Ezra writes, the command not to steal is given in the plural, as well as many of these laws here, because Parashat Kedoshim teaches collective responsibility for sins. Hence one who knows of theft or fraud and doesn't report it is also somewhat liable. But the key is not the lie per se, but how we present ourselves in our dealings with others. We must judge our honesty largely in terms of how it impacts the fairness of our dealings with others. That's my own somewhat skeptical understanding of the “sinfulness” of lying.



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL  
The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

### Shabbat Kedoshim

May 10-11, 2024 | 3 Iyar, 5784

#### SHABBAT SCHEDULE

Kaplan: p. 598 | Haftarah: p. 1168 // Hertz: p. 497 | Haftarah: p. 944

**Candle Lighting** | 7:43 pm

**Evening Services** | 7:00 pm

**Zemirot** | 8:15 am | Main Sanctuary

**Shahrit** | 9:00 am | Main Sanctuary

**Shabbat Morning Talk** | At Morning Services | Rabbi Soloveichik

**Tot Shabbat** | 10:00 am | Fidanque Youth Room

**Youth Groups** | 10:00 am | Elias Room

**Jr. Congregation** | 10:30 am | Little Synagogue

**Kiddush** | following services

**Shabbat Afternoon Class** | 6:55 pm | Rabbi Soloveichik | Main Sanctuary

**Teen Shiur** | 6:55 pm | Baruch-Lev Kelman | Elias Room

**Evening Services** | 7:40 pm

**Habdala** | 8:43 pm

*Yom HaZikaron begins on Sunday night, and Yom HaAtzmaut begins on Monday night.*

#### Weekday Service Times

Sunday Morning: 8:05 am

Monday-Friday Mornings: 7:05 am

Sunday-Thursday Evenings (Minha & Arbit): 6:30 pm

**ANNUAL SPRING FUNDRAISER  
VIRTUAL LECTURE SERIES**

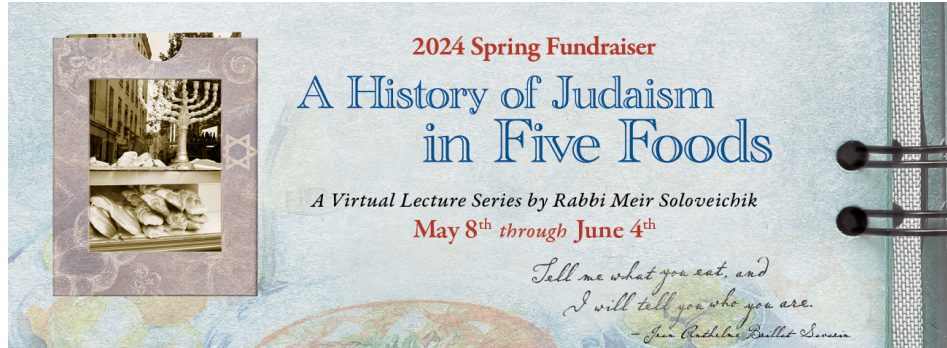
Next Session: THIS TUESDAY – You can still sign up!

**"A History of Judaism in Five Foods"**

*A Virtual Lecture Series by Rabbi Meir Soloveichik*

May 8-June 4

Sign up and sponsor at [shearithisrael.org/spring-fundraiser2024](https://shearithisrael.org/spring-fundraiser2024)



**Register & Sponsor now to access  
the upcoming livestreams on Zoom at 7:30 pm!**

**Virtual Lecture Schedule:**

Wednesday, May 8	Holy Hallah to Holey Bagels: The Striking, Shocking, Amusing, and Inspiring 4,000 Year Story of Jewish Bread
Tuesday, May 14	Hamin, Cholent, Adafina: The Stirring Story of Sabbath Stew
Tuesday, May 21	Boureka, Latkeh, Knish: How the Humble Potato Changed Jewish Life Forever
Tuesday, May 28	Arbes to Hummus: A Little Legume, Jewish History, and the Future of Israeli Cuisine
Tuesday, June 4	A Talmudic Fisherman, Chagall's Herring, and Rabbinic Sushi: The Jewish Affection for Fish from Egypt to Today

*All sponsors and underwriters will be recognized in a beautiful content-rich commemorative booklet.*

**\*For Sponsors of \$360 & above:** You will be invited to attend **live culinary** "edutainment" experiences with Rabbi Soloveichik.

**COMING UP**

Registration & additional details at [shearithisrael.org](https://shearithisrael.org)

*The Shearith Israel League Presents*

**Celebrating Jewish Italian Heritage at Shearith Israel**

*Featuring Shearith Israel member Dr. Roberto Levi*

*in conversation with author and journalist Simone Somekh*

**THIS Sunday, May 12 | 4:00 pm | Elias Room**

Join us for a multigenerational discussion of Italian Jewry!

**Upper West Side Yom HaZikaron/Yom HaAtzmaut Event**

**May 13 | 7:00 pm Services & Commemoration | 8:00 pm Celebration**

Hosted this year at The Jewish Center, 131 W. 86th Street

**Registration required; free but sponsorships are appreciated!**

*Refreshments will be served*

RSVP at [jewishcenter.org](https://jewishcenter.org).

*Presented by Shearith Israel's Caring Connection*

**6th Annual Smash the Stigma Event:**

**A Jewish Communal Conversation on Mental Health**

*This year highlighting our trauma triggered by Oct 7*

**Wednesday, May 22 | 7:00 pm, Following 6:30 pm Evening Services**

**This Year's Panelists:**

**Sarri Singer of *Strength to Strength* and Asher Lovy of *Zaakah***  
*Moderated by Dr. Nava Silton, Developmental Psychologist & Director of  
Community Outreach at the Jewish Center*

**Memorial Day at Chatham Square Cemetery**

**Monday, May 27 | 10:30 am**

**Chatham Square Cemetery, 55 St. James Place**

**Sign Up to Be A Girls' Book of Ruth Reader**

**Rehearsals on Sundays, May 19 & June 9th | 10 am | Main Sanctuary**

**Reading on Wednesday, Shabuot I, June 12**

*Interested? Contact Mrs. Lisa Robde at [lrohde-csi@yahoo.com](mailto:lrohde-csi@yahoo.com) to sign up.*

**Stitch & Fix Has Returned!**

**Alternating Tuesdays, May 7 & 21, June 4 & 18 | 1 pm-3 pm | Elias Room**

*RSVP to Rose Edinger at [rgedinger@gmail.com](mailto:rgedinger@gmail.com).*