



AHAVAT ACHIM
קָהָלָת אֶחָדִים
THE FAMILY SHUL

CANDLE LIGHTING 4:10 PM | 23 KISLEV | DECEMBER 13, 2025 | HAVDALA 5:14 PM

שבת פרשת וישב

SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYEISHEV

Haftorah is Amos 2:6-3:8. We bless the month of Tevet. We do not say אב הרחמים.

FRIDAY EVENING

MINCHA 4:15 PM

SHKIA 4:29 PM

TZAIT HAKOCHAVIM 5:09 PM

SHABBAT

HASHKAMA 7:45 AM

SHACHARIT - MAIN 9:00 AM

POST-HASHKAMA SHIUR ≈9:30 AM

LAST KRIAT SHEMA 9:32 AM

FUNDAMENTALS SHIUR ≈11:30 AM

GEDOLAH 12:14 PM

PRE-MINCHA SHIUR 3:20 PM

MINCHA 4:00 PM

SHKIA 4:29 PM

MAARIV 5:14 PM

SEUDAH SHLISHIT

Seudah Shlishit is sponsored by Dina & Elliot Greene to commemorate the yahrtzeit of Dina's mother, Zelda Rubinowitz^{נ"ע} (Zelda bat Tzvi).

SHABBAT CHANUKAH DINNER/CHAZZAN-IN-RESIDENCE

Just one week away! RSVP here: [Dinner](#). As a special treat, that Shabbat we will be having Chazzan-In-Residence Akiva Abramowitz join us. Akiva is a distinguished Ba'al Tefillah, a graduate of Yeshiva University, and a Brooklyn native.

BOKER TOV CHANUKAH EVENT



On Sunday, December 21, join us for our Boker Tov Chanukah event, with musical Hallel, kids activities, and breakfast (no charge). RSVP here: [Breakfast](#).

GITA COOPERWASSER ה"ע YOUTH EVENTS

On Shabbat, December 20, there will be a Children's Seudah Shlishit/Chanukah program, at 4:15 PM, followed by a glow-in-the-dark musical havdala! RSVP by 12/14 here: [Youth!](#), \$5/child, \$12 family/max.

HALACHOT OF CHANUKAH



Molad for Tevet is Shabbat, Dec. 20, 2:22 AM & 10 Chalokim.

ראש חדש טבת יהיה ביום שבת
קודש ויום ראשון הבא עלינו ועל
כל ישראל לטובה



Selected laws may be found on page 4.



SUNDAY
12/14

MONDAY
12/15

TUESDAY
12/16

WEDNESDAY
12/17

THURSDAY
12/18

FRIDAY
12/19

WEEKDAY MINYANIM AT AHAVAT ACHIM

SHACHARIT

8:00 AM

6:10 AM

6:10 AM

6:10 AM

6:10 AM

6:10 AM

**2ND SHACHARIT MINYON -
YISHTABACH AT 7:40 AM**

7:25 AM

7:25 AM

7:25 AM

7:25 AM

7:25 AM

MINCHA/MAARIV

4:17 PM

4:17 PM

4:18 PM

4:18 PM

4:18 PM

4:15 PM

ZMANIM

Earliest Talit

6:13 AM

6:14 AM

6:15 AM

6:15 AM

6:16 AM

6:16 AM

Gedolah

12:14 PM

12:15 PM

12:15 PM

12:16 PM

12:16 PM

12:17 PM

Shkia

4:29 PM

4:29 PM

4:30 PM

4:30 PM

4:30 PM

Tzait

5:09 PM

5:09 PM

5:10 PM

5:10 PM

5:10 PM

Rabbi Ely Shestack

President Jay Herman

UPCOMING EVENTS

Dec. 19 - Friday night Chanukah dinner, RSVP here: [Dinner](#).

Dec. 21 - Boker Tov Chanukah Event, with musical Hallel, kids activities, and breakfast (no charge). RSVP here: [Breakfast](#).

Feb. 21 - 4th Annual Comedy Night featuring Mike Fine, Sat. night, Nov. 8, Doors Open 7:30 PM, show starts at 8:00 PM! Buy Tickets here: [LAUGH A LOT!](#)

IN OUR FUTURE

Jan. 10 - Kiddush is sponsored by the Riskin family as a *சர்தְתַּתְהָבָה* for keeping Greg's long-term memory intact and allowing him to still recite his Bar Mitzvah parsha, and as a *תָּדוֹהָהָרָבָה* to the community for supporting Greg and his entire family as he continues his battle with Frontotemporal Dementia.

BOARD MEETINGS 8:15 PM

Dec. 29 (Mon.) - At shul w/Zoom option.

Jan. 27, Feb. 24, Mar. 24, Apr. 28, May 26, & June 30

KIDDUSH & SEUDAH SHLISHIT

- Enjoy Scotch at Kiddush, please donate a bottle to the shul from time to time.
- To sponsor a Kiddush (prices start at \$318, plus a bottle of scotch) email dmgarfunkel@gmail.com.
- Want to know the menu for Kiddush? Email dmgarfunkel@gmail.com to be put on the WhatsApp group. To sponsor Seudah Shlishit for \$136 (or in the case of multiple sponsors, \$100 per sponsor), email dmgarfunkel@gmail.com.

BIRTHDAY & ANNIVERSARY KIDDUSH

To add a birthday or anniversary to our December list (next Kiddush on Shabbat, Dec. 6), click here: [SIMCHA](#). Listings/sponsorships are \$36 per family per month. RSVP for the December birthday/anniversary kiddush by Sat. night, Nov. 29.

SHIURIM



- RAV SOLOVEITCHIK ON THE PARSHA, Tuesdays at 1:00 PM (<https://zoom.us/j/729131899>, PW: 112233).
- TORAH FOR YOUR COMMUTE, via a Whatsapp group, with 3-minute daily Halacha insights. To join email Rabbi Shestack at rabbishestack@gmail.com.
- POST-HASHKAMA SHIUR, alternates between examining the development of Halachot and analyzing Mishlei (Proverbs)
- FUNDAMENTALS OF JEWISH THOUGHT, after Kiddush, discussing the Political Philosophy of our Patriarchs.
- SHABBAT SHIUR, **Sanhedrin Ch. 8**, 40 minutes prior to mincha.
- TZURBA M'RABANAN w/ Zack Doberman, Wednesdays at 8:30 PM. In-person at the shul and via Zoom.
- MISHNA CHABURAH, w/Jeff Safier, after 7:25 AM Shacharit minyon (~10 minutes).
- HALACHA SHIUR FOR WOMEN, Monday nights, 8:15 PM.
- SEDER ON THE SIDDUR, at Seudah Shlishit - **Korbonot Part IV (R. Donin - p. 199-200, R. Munk - pp. 61-73)**.



GITA COOPERWASSER ג"ה

YOUTH EVENTS

Dec. 20 - Children's Seudah Shlishit/ Chanukah program, at 4:15 PM, followed by a glow-in-the-dark musical havdala! RSVP by 12/14 here: [Youth!](#), \$5/child, \$12 family/max.

Jan. 3 - Parent-Child Learning.

Feb. 7 - Parent-Child Learning.

GITA COOPERWASSER ג"ה SHABBAT YOUTH INFO



- SHABBAT YOUTH LEADERS: 3RD - 5TH GRADE: ISABELLA & LETIZIA; K - 2ND GR.: ABBY & CASSANDRA; AND 3 YRS OLD - PERRI & SOPHIA.**
- Youth group for 2nd - 5th Graders starts at 9:00 AM (Drop Off) in the Youth Room on left on entering the social hall.
- Youth group for children 4 years old through 1st Grade starts at 9:00 AM (Drop Off) in the Youth Room on the right upon entering the social hall.
- Parent & Me, 9:00 AM in the Beit Midrash.
- Rabbi Meet & Greet, Friday night, kids can come over to the Rabbi after davening to receive a cup of grape juice and a ticket!
- Children earn tickets for coming to minyan (Friday night and/or Shabbat day), asking the rabbi questions or attending parent-child learning programs! Tickets can be redeemed for prizes.
- Children's corner at Seudah Shlishit, 1st to 5th graders will get 10 Torah questions in 10 minutes from Rabbi Shestack, with special snacks, tickets and more.

18-25 Saddle River Road

Fair Lawn, NJ 07410

201.797.0502

<http://www.ahavatachim.org>



NAME	HEBREW DATE	CANDLE EVENING OF	DEDICATOR	RELATIONSHIP
Sylvia Eis	4	December 23	Jacob Eis	Mother
Blima Jablon	8	December 27	The Schwitzer Family	Grandmother
Samuel Eis	12	December 31	Jacob Eis	Father
Benjamin H. Sokoloff	12	December 31	Ron Sokoloff	Father
Andrew Leeb	13	January 1	Janie Kirschenbaum	Father
Lester Plotnick	13	January 1	Steven Plotnick	Father
Ida Freilich	15	January 3	Eita Latkin	Mother
Udel Chedva Schaeffer	16	January 4	Mimi Weinraub	Mother
Sarah Brody	19	January 7	Ron Sokoloff	Grandmother
Leonore Sokoloff	22	January 10	Ron Sokoloff	Mother
Abraham Rotberg	25	January 13	Ellen Chass	Father

DAVID SCHWITZER ט"ו SOCIAL HALL

Contact Lori at garfmom@gmail.com to book the David Schwitzer ט"ו Social Hall for an event or occasion. \$250 (members), \$325 (Associates), or \$400 paid in advance for non-members, plus the cost of clean up (and a \$150 refundable security/cleaning deposit). Private caterers must be approved by the Rabbi.

CHESED TEAM

If you or someone you know needs assistance, email us at chesed@ahavatachim.org.

YAHRZEIT PLAQUES

Memorialize a loved one with a plaque, \$300 for members/\$450 for nonmembers. We will strive to send you written notice of upcoming yahrzeit and announce name during public Yizkor. Email Amy at yahrzeit@ahavatachim.org to arrange.

DONATE A SEFER, ETC.

Donate Siddurim & Machzorim (\$40), and Chumashim (\$60). Contact David at dmgarfunkel@gmail.com for details.

MISHEBAYRACH

For a Mishebayrach pledge to give Tzedakah on behalf of those for whom you asked Hashem's blessing, contributions to the shul can be made using Paypal's Giving Fund (with 100% of the proceeds going to the Shul), by clicking here: [Ahavat Achim Donations](#). If by check, please indicate on its face "Aliyah Donation."

HONORARIA

The available Honoraria list will be provided upon request by contacting Steven Plotnick at seplotnick@gmail.com.

SINGLES SHIDDUCH GROUP

Reach out to Rabbi Shestack or Sara Levine (saralevine06@gmail.com) if interested.

SPONSORSHIPS

Sponsorships opportunities for Yahrzeits, Refuahs, and Hodahs (thanks), are available for regular shiurim, youth events and similar activities (but not for established honorariums or sponsorship funded events). Cost of sponsorship (shiur or youth event) is \$100 per sponsor. Multiple sponsors for an event will be accepted. Sponsorships will be listed in the bulletin and announced at the event (and, if possible, a placard with the sponsorship will be prepared and displayed at the event).

Sponsorships do not include any extra amenities (such as food). Please contact Steve Plotnick for questions or clarifications.

MEN'S CLUB

Email MensClub@AhavatAchim.Org to join the Men's Club.

הנוכה - CHANUKAH (SUN., DEC. 14 - MON., DEC. 22)

One should light Chanukah candles as close to 10 minutes after sunset as possible (excepting Sat. night). However, it is preferable for the family to light together rather than have a portion of the family light earlier. Everyone in the household is encouraged to light Chanuka candles. (The matriarch of the household should follow the family custom.) There must be enough oil/wax to last one half hour past the time when the stars appear. If one is lighting after the appearance of the stars there must still be enough oil to burn for half an hour.

Under extenuating circumstances, one may light even after midnight if any members of the family are awake to see the lights. If the Chanukah lights are accidentally extinguished prior to their having burned the requisite time, one is not obligated by Halacha to rekindle them; it is, however, permissible to rekindle them, but without a Bracha.

There is a custom to give children Chanukah Gelt as part of publicizing the miracle.

In Shemonei Esrei and Bircat HaMazon add **וְעַל הַנְּסִים** (do not repeat if omitted). At Shacharit we recite the complete Hallel even on Rosh Chodesh.

וַיְדַחֲנוּ - SIXTH DAY OF CHANUKAH FRIDAY EVENING - DECEMBER 19 (29 KISLEV)

We light the Chanukah Menorah at home before lighting the Shabbat candles. One must be careful to use enough oil (or light a large enough candle) to remain lit until thirty minutes after the appearance of three stars. There is a minhag to daven Mincha before lighting the Menorah, but one should not delay the welcoming of Shabbat because of this. One may not light Chanukah or Shabbat candles earlier than Plag HaMincha (3:33 PM).

מַוְצָּאי שַׁבָּת - MOTZEI SHABBAT

There are two approaches concerning the order of Havdalah and Chanukah Menorah lighting in the home. If one has a family minhag, they should continue to follow that practice, otherwise the psak (ruling) of the Rabbi is to make Havdalah first, and then to light the Chanukah Menorah.

AHAVAT ACHIM MEMBERSHIP/ HOSPITALITY

Email Sara at membership@ahavatachim.org for membership details or Shabbat hospitality.

PERSONAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Various life cycle events related to members are announced in the bulletin (e.g., births and weddings of children/grandchildren, bar/bat mitzvahs of children, deaths requiring shiva observance, as well as travel to/from Israel to study). Other personal announcements are not appropriate except as part of the bulletin's dedication (\$36 cost - \$54 with photo).

NUMBERS & INFO

ERUV: To subscribe for updates, email fairlawneruv@groups.io. Check status at <https://groups.io/g/fairlawneruv> or call 201-254-9190.

MIKVAH: 201-796-0350. At Shomrei Torah. Go to <http://www.fairlawnmikvah.org/> for online booking.

TWITTER: AhavatAchimFL

FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100091322384429

INSTAGRAM: www.instagram.com/ahavatachim/

FLICKR: [flickr.com/photos/ahavatachim/albums](https://flickr.com/photos/ahavatachim/)

BULLETIN DEDICATIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND SHUL CALENDAR

Email seplotnick@gmail.com for an announcement of a simcha, refuah or life cycle event in the bulletin or to dedicate a bulletin for \$36 (\$54 w/Photo).

COMMUNITY SECURITY



To become part of our community security service, email Margo at security@ahavatachim.org.

HOW TO DONATE TO THE SHUL USING PAYPAL

Please do not simply pay the shul using PayPal, as that incurs a 3% service charge that will get charged to the shul. Instead, please use our fee-free dedicated PayPal link <http://paypal.com/us/fundraiser/charity/1444321>. PayPal will email you a receipt for your charitable donation and the shul will receive 100% of your donation. [Make sure you click the "SHARE MY NAME" box so the shul will know who paid so that we can credit your account.]



Mishlei/Proverbs
Post-Hashkama Shiur 13 - The Forbidden Woman Lurks

אָנָּבָנִי שְׁלֹךְ אָמָרָנִי תְּצִאֵנִי אֶתְּחַדְּתִּי
אָתָּה וְמֵדָעַ לְבִינָה תְּקַרְאָה: יְשַׁמֵּר מֵצָוֶת יְהוָה אֶתְּנִישְׁוֹן עַזְּנִי
אָתָּה וְמֵדָעַ לְבִינָה תְּקַרְאָה: יְשַׁמְּרָךְ מֵאָשָׁה גָּגָה מִזְכָּרָה אֶמְרָה
בְּחַלּוֹן בְּיַתְּמִימִי בְּעֵד אַשְׁנָבִי נְשָׁקְפָתִי: יוֹאָרָא בְּפַתְּחָיִם אֲבִינָה בְּבָנִים
בְּעֵר חֲסָרְלָבָן: עַבְרָבָן בְּשָׁוֹק אַצְלָ פָּנָה וְרַדְךָ בִּיתְהָא יְצָעָד: בְּבָנָשָׁרְפָּעָרָב בְּאִישְׁוֹן
בְּלִילָה וְאַפְּלָה: וְהַגָּה אַשָּׁה לְקַרְאָתָן שִׁיתָּה זָוָה וְגַזְרָתָה לְבָבָן
יְהָמִיה הָא וְסָרָת בְּבִיתָה לְאַיְשָׁבָנוּ רְגִילִיה: יְפָעָם בְּחַוֹזָעָם בְּרַחְבָּות וְאַצְלָ פָּנָה תְּאָרָב: —

1My son, heed my words, and store my commandments with you. 2Keep my commandments and live, and let my teachings (Torah) be the apple of your eyes. 3Bind them on your fingers; inscribe them on the tablet of your heart. 4Say to wisdom, "You are my sister," and you shall call understanding a kinswoman. 5They (she¹) shall guard you from a forbidden woman, from a foreign woman who talks smoothly. 6For from the window of my house, through the lattice I gazed, 7and I saw among the simpletons, noticed among the youths, a lad devoid of understanding. 8He was crossing the street next to her corner, walking by her house. 9[Traversing from] twilight, as daylight becomes evening, through the blackness of night, until [it becomes] pitch darkness.² 10And behold a woman [coming] toward him, dressed like a prostitute with her heart on a mission. 11She is boisterous and rebellious; her feet make sure she is never home. 12Now [she is] in the street, now [she is] in the square; she is lurking at every corner.³

A. The father previously asked the son to keep his commandments (Mishlei 6:20). Here he reinforces this twice. After twice telling the son to not forsake his mother's Torah (Mishlei 1:8 and 6:20), the father here mentions "his" Torah for the second time in Mishlei⁴ and asks that the son desire it like an apple that catches one's eye.

B. On its face, four women (actual or metaphorically speaking) are being discussed in the 4th and 5th verses, namely: wisdom, understanding, the forbidden (strange) woman and the foreign woman. A few thoughts:

- The father asks the son to relate to wisdom as his sister, and understanding as a relative. The father then tells the son that either they or she (depending on your understanding of the 5th verse) will guard you from forbidden and foreign women. If we assume that only one of these metaphorical women will be the guard that the father mentions ("she"), on the one hand the sister (wisdom) as the closer relative would be more likely to be the one referred to⁵, especially as "Lady Wisdom" was previously established set up as a counter to the strange woman, but as "understanding" usually implies being able to discern between right and wrong, the Malbim believes the "she" here is referring to understanding, and note that later the "lad" that enters into an adulterous relationship is referred to as devoid of understanding.
- In addition to "lady" wisdom introduced to us in the first chapter as a counter to the strange woman, at Mishlei 5:18-19 the father implored the son to choose the "wife of his youth" over the strange woman. Here "understanding" is added as another possible foil to the allure of the temptress.
- Wisdom and understanding may be a singular female metaphor, allowing the understanding of the translation to be "she shall guard you" without an either/or choice.
- Malbim proffers the idea that the forbidden (strange) woman is a Jewish woman other than one's wife, while the foreign woman is a non-Jew.
- Verses 4 and 5 could be understood as setting up subject matter respectively, *i.e.*, it is possible that wisdom guards from the forbidden woman (a concept we previously explored when we examined wisdom as protecting from immorality), and understanding in turn guards from the foreign woman (as being able to distinguish between right and wrong should allow one to filter her smooth "foreign" words so they have no impact).

¹ Most translations I've seen use "she" here based on the feminine form, and not "they" (even though wisdom and understanding are two separate items)

² My interpretive additions are intended to align with the Malbim's understanding that the boy set out when it was turning dark, but delayed the encounter until the darkest part of the night. Vilna Gaon sees the progression as twilight, evening, black of night, and then pitch darkness.

³ Mishlei Chapter 7.

⁴ The first time the father mentions his Torah at Mishlei 4:2 he is asking that the son not forsake his instructions as he is giving good teachings (Torah).

⁵ In a non-metaphorical setting, compare this to Miriam guarding Moshe.

Post-Hashkama Shiur 13

C. The father then sets up a presumably fictional account of a situation that he is seeing from his window whereby a young man ends up in an adulterous relationship. A few highlights of that account:

- The scene is established by observing that there were simpletons and youths in the streets.
- A “lad” is then identified, who presumptively is acting in a way that led the observer to declare that this lad lacked understanding (*i.e.*, did not distinguish right from wrong in choices made).
- The lad then crosses the street next to “her” corner, and walks by “her” house. Who the “her” is referring to is not at given over until later. For now, the focus is on the lad’s efforts. How long was the lad roaming about? From twilight, through the darkening evening, until the night was pitch black. The observer may be establishing that the lad is not an innocent victim, as he wandered around for hours waiting for something to happen as relates to the “her” being referred to.
- Then their meeting occurs, and the lad and the woman that was only indirectly referenced so far appears.
- The woman comes towards the lad, and immediately takes charge, being dressed like a “prostitute” and with a heart “on a mission”. The woman feels no shame, she is proud of her actions as demonstrated by her being loud and rebellious (*i.e.*, she has no qualms calling attention to herself). As mentioned above, she goes from being someone only mentioned tangentially, *e.g.*, “her” corner and “her” house, to someone who is most front and center, seemingly everywhere, “in the street”, “in the square”, and “lurking at every corner”.

D. In the next Mishlei shiur, in the woman’s own words, we will get insight into who she is, and how she thinks.



Be on the lookout
for RSVP forms
and sponsorship
opportunities!

CHANUKAH

5786/2025



Parent Child Learning - Chanukah Edition

"Oily Miracles vs. Winning Wars"

December 6th at 6pm | Nudelman Home
Pizza Dinner to be Served



Chanukah Shiur at the Shestack Home

"8 Ways to make Chanukah a Richer Experience"

December 14th at 7:30pm
Shiur to begin at 8:00pm



Friday Night Dinner

Dinner following Ma'ariv

December 19th at 5:30pm



Youth Chanukah Celebration

*Kids program followed by Seudah Shelishit
and a musical glow in the dark havdallah*

December 20th starting at 4:15pm



Boker Tov Chanukah

*Shacharit with Musical Hallel followed by
Kids Activities and Breakfast*

December 21st starting at 9:15am



ANNUAL BERGEN COUNTY CHANUKAH TOY DRIVE

*Drop off new, unwrapped gifts for children and teens
in the designated box in the shul lobby from November 17-28*





Chazzan in Residence

Akiva Abramowitz

Join us for a very special Shabbat with our Chazzan in Residence, Akiva Abramowitz, on **Shabbat Chanukah, December 19-20!**



Akiva Abramowitz is a distinguished Ba'al Tefillah, a graduate of Yeshiva University, and a Brooklyn native. He has inspired congregations by leading davening for Shabbat and Chagim in shuls throughout the country and overseas, fostering participatory davening and communal singing. Beyond the bimah, Akiva is a vocalist for major Jewish a cappella groups, including The Maccabeats and Y-Studs A Cappella, and has performed at numerous bar mitzvahs and concert venues worldwide. When not leading davening or performing, he practices law as an attorney at Goldberg Miller and Rubin.



AHAVAT ACHIM
קהילת אהבת אחים
THE FAMILY SHUL



Shabbat Chanukah Dinner

Join us on Friday, December 19, following daavening
(approx 5:15pm) for a dinner filled with ruach,
singing, great food, and family!

RSVP by 12/10 for early bird pricing!

EARLY BIRD PRICING!

ADULTS (12 YEARS OLD +) - \$15

CHILDREN AGES 6 - 11 - \$7

CHILDREN AGES 3 - 5 - FREE

FAMILY MAX - \$36

Prices go up after 12/10!





CHANUKAH CELEBRATION



SEUDAH SHLISHIT DINNER FOR CHILDREN, AN
INTERACTIVE CHANUKAH PROGRAM FOLLOWED BY
GLOW IN THE DARK MUSICAL HAVDALA!

DECEMBER 20TH
STARTING AT 4:15 PM

[RSVP HERE](#) BY 12/14
\$5/CHILD, \$12/FAMILY MAX

**Sponsorship
welcome!**

BOKER TOV CHANUKAH

- MUSICAL HALLEL
- KIDS ACTIVITIES
- FREE BREAKFAST

SUNDAY DEC. 21ST

9:15 AM SHACHARIT (Hallel at 9:40)

10:00 AM ARTS & CRAFTS for Kids 0-5

MACCABEE GAMES for Kids 6+

10:30 AM BREAKFAST

RSVP AT [TINYURL.COM/BOKERTOVCHANUKAH](https://tinyurl.com/bokertovchanukah)



AHAVAT ACHIM
קָהָלָת אֶחָדָת אֶחָדִים
THE FAMILY SHUL

Ahavat Achim invites
you to join us for a fun

Monthly

Simcha Kiddush

Have a birthday, anniversary, or
another reason to say Mazel Tov?
For \$36, you can co-sponsor that
month's simcha kiddush!

Click [HERE](#) to get
your sponsorship in!



Deadline: 1 week before each kiddush!

Ahavat Achim Presents...

★ Annual ★



COMEDY



Night!



WITH WINE AND DESSERT

Saturday, February, 21

8:00 PM/Doors Open at 7:30

Address to be
given after
RSVP



FEATURING

the comedy of

MIKE FINE



Purchase Advance Tickets online before Feb. 18

www.AhavatAchim.org/events/comedy



Members: \$25

Non-Members: \$30

At the door: \$36



Sponsorships available! \$150 for 4 up-front seats!



Covenant & Conversation

VAYESHEV • בש"ז

FROM THE TEACHINGS AND WRITINGS OF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ז"צ

Jonathan Sacks
THE RABBI SACKS LEGACY

With thanks to the Schimmel Family for their generous sponsorship of Covenant & Conversation, dedicated in loving memory of Harry (Chaim) Schimmel.

“I have loved the Torah of R’ Chaim Schimmel ever since I first encountered it. It strives to be not just about truth on the surface but also its connection to a deeper truth beneath. Together with Anna, his remarkable wife of 60 years, they built a life dedicated to love of family, community, and Torah.

An extraordinary couple who have moved me beyond measure by the example of their lives.” — Rabbi Sacks

This year’s series of essays were originally written and recorded by Rabbi Sacks zt”l in 5773 (2012–2013). These timeless messages are accompanied by a new [Family Edition](#) created to inspire intergenerational learning on the Parsha.

Refusing Comfort, Keeping Hope

The deception has taken place. Joseph has been sold into slavery. His brothers dip his coat in blood. They bring it back to their father, saying: “We found this. Try to identify it. Is it your son’s robe or not?” Jacob recognises it and replies, “It is my son’s robe. A wild beast must have eaten him! Joseph has been torn limb from limb!” We then read:

Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned for his son for many days. All his sons and daughters tried to comfort him, but he *refused to be comforted* and said, “I will go down to *Sheol* [to the grave] mourning for my son.” His father wept for him.

Gen. 37:34–35

There are laws in Judaism about the limits of grief – *shiva, shloshim*, a year. There is no such thing as a bereavement for which

grief is endless. The Talmud says that God admonishes one who weeps beyond the appointed time, “You are not more compassionate than I.”¹ And yet Jacob refuses to be comforted.

A Midrash gives a remarkable explanation. “One can be comforted for one who is dead, but not for one who is still living,” it says. In other words, Jacob refused to be comforted *because he had not yet given up hope that Joseph was still alive*. That, tragically, is the fate of those who have lost members of their family (the parents of soldiers missing in action, for example) but have as yet no proof that they are dead. They cannot go through the normal stages of mourning because they cannot abandon the possibility that the missing person is still capable of being rescued. Their continuing anguish is a form of loyalty; to give up, to mourn, to be reconciled to loss is a kind of betrayal.

¹ Mo’ed Katan 27b.

In such cases, grief lacks closure. To refuse to be comforted is to refuse to give up hope.

Yet on what basis did Jacob continue to hope? Surely he had recognised Joseph's blood-stained coat – he said explicitly, "It is my son's robe. A wild beast must have eaten him! Joseph has been torn limb from limb!" Do these words not mean that he had accepted that Joseph was dead?

The late David Daube made a suggestion that I find convincing.² The words the sons say to Jacob – *haker na*, literally "identify it please" – have a quasi-legal connotation. Daube relates this passage to another, with which it has close linguistic parallels:

If a man gives a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any other animal to his neighbour for safekeeping, and it dies or is injured or is taken away while no one is looking, the issue between them will be settled by the taking of an oath before the Lord that the neighbour did not lay hands on the other person's property... If it [the animal] was torn to pieces by a wild animal, he shall bring the remains as evidence and he will not be required to pay for the torn animal.

Exodus 22:10–13

The issue at stake is the extent of responsibility borne by a guardian (*shomer*). If the animal is lost through

negligence, the guardian is at fault and must make good the loss. If there is no negligence, merely *force majeure*, an unavoidable, unforeseeable accident, the guardian is exempt from blame. One such case is where the loss has been caused by a wild animal. The wording in the law – *tarof yitaref*, "torn to pieces" – exactly parallels Jacob's judgment in the case of Joseph: *tarof toraf Yosef*, "Joseph has been torn to pieces/limb from limb."

We know that some such law existed prior to the giving of the Torah. Jacob himself says to Laban, whose flocks and herds had been placed in his charge, "I did not bring you animals torn by wild beasts; I bore the loss myself" (Gen. 31:39). This implies that guardians even then were exempt from responsibility for the damage caused by wild animals. We also know that an elder brother carried a similar responsibility for the fate of a younger brother placed in his charge, as, for example, when the two were alone together. That is the significance of Cain's denial when confronted by God as to the fate of Abel:

"Am I my brother's keeper [*shomer*]?"

Gen. 4:9

We now understand a series of nuances in the encounter between Jacob and his sons upon their return without Joseph. Normally they would be held responsible for their younger brother's

² David Daube, *Studies in Biblical Law*, Cambridge: University Press, 1947.

disappearance. To avoid this, as in the case of later biblical law, they “bring the remains as evidence.” If those remains show signs of an attack by a wild animal, they must – by virtue of the law then operative – be held innocent. Their request to Jacob, *haker na*, must be construed as a legal request, meaning, “Examine the evidence.” Jacob has no alternative but to do so, and by virtue of what he has seen, to acquit them. A judge, however, may be forced to acquit someone accused of a crime because the evidence is insufficient to justify a conviction, while still retaining lingering private doubts. So Jacob was forced to find his sons innocent, without necessarily trusting what they said. In fact, Jacob did not believe it, and his refusal to be comforted shows that he was unconvincing. He continued to hope that Joseph was still alive. That hope was eventually justified: Joseph was still alive, and father and son were ultimately reunited.

The refusal to be comforted sounded more than once in Jewish history. The prophet Jeremiah heard it in a later age:

This is what the Lord says:
“A voice is heard in Ramah,
Mourning and great weeping,
Rachel weeping for her children
Refusing to be comforted,
Because her children are no more.”
This is what the Lord says:
“Restrain your voice from weeping,
And your eyes from tears,
For your work will be rewarded,” says

the Lord.

“They will return from the land of the enemy.
So there is hope for your future,”
declares the Lord,
“Your children will return to their own land.”

Jeremiah 31:15–17

Why was Jeremiah sure that Jews would return? Because they refused to be comforted – meaning, they refused to give up hope.

So it was during the Babylonian exile, as articulated in one of the most paradigmatic expressions of the refusal to be comforted:

By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept,
As we remembered Zion...
How can we sing the songs of the Lord in a strange land?
If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
May my right hand forget [its skill],
May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth
If I do not remember you,
If I do not consider Jerusalem above my highest joy.

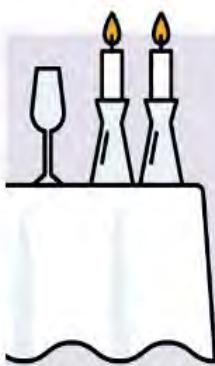
Psalms 137:1–6

It is said that Napoleon, passing a synagogue on the fast day of Tisha b’Av, heard the sounds of lamentation. “What are the Jews crying for?” he asked one of his officers. “For Jerusalem,” the soldier replied. “How long ago did they lose it?”

“More than 1,700 years ago.” “A people who can mourn for Jerusalem so long, will one day have it restored to them,” the emperor is reputed to have replied. Jews are the people who refused to be comforted because they never gave up hope. Jacob did eventually see Joseph again. Rachel’s children did return to the land. Jerusalem is once again the Jewish home. All the evidence may suggest otherwise: it may seem to signify irretrievable loss, a decree of history that cannot be overturned, a fate that must be accepted.

Jews never believed the evidence because they had something else to set against it –

a faith, a trust, an unbreakable hope that proved stronger than historical inevitability. It is not too much to say that Jewish survival was sustained in that hope. And that hope came from a simple – or perhaps not so simple – phrase in the life of Jacob. He refused to be comforted. And so – while we live in a world still scarred by violence, poverty and injustice – must we.



Around the Shabbat Table

1. What hope have you held onto, even when it seemed difficult? What helped you keep believing?
2. How did Jacob’s unwavering hope shape the future of a people?
3. Can you think of another time when one person’s hope inspired others?

● These questions come from this week's **Family Edition** to Rabbi Sacks' Covenant & Conversation. For an interactive, multi-generational study, check out the full edition at rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation-family-edition/vayeshev/refusing-comfort-keeping-hope/