

(Debar Torah continued from back panel)

Concerning criminal matters, if the defendant was unable to prove his innocence to the local tribunal, he was placed in prison and a written docket sent to the vizier for adjudication. The vizier was responsible for nearly all the judicial functions of Egypt. One can imagine that the vizier of Egypt truly was adjudicating matters from morning unto evening.

Unlike Egypt the judicial systems of Mesopotamia were structured differently. While the king still had ultimate judicial authority – he was mainly responsible for promulgating laws (such as (most famously) the *Code of Hammurabi*.) The King only served as judge in the most sensitive and important cases. An entire system of judges (*Dayyanu*) was instituted. Cases were adjudicated according to the laws set forth in the various codes. Unlike Egypt, matters were handled by the judiciary and no equivalent to the judicial function of the vizier exists.

Understanding the differences between the systems of Egypt and Mesopotamia, we can now return to the advice the Jethro gives to Moses. In our *parashah* we witness Moses’ rejection of the centralized Egyptian system in favor of the localized and hierarchical Mesopotamian judicial system that was suggested by Jethro.

Security Enhancements

Thanks to a substantial grant awarded to us by the US Dept. of Homeland Security, we have made many improvements to our security procedures and equipment. You may notice new blue emergency levers and strobe lights throughout our facility. These are intended to be highly visible. In the event that the lights are activated, congregants are asked to stay put and listen for instructions by CSI personnel.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mazal Tob to David Hidary on donning tefillin for the first time during a pre-bar mitzvah trip to Israel.

Jethro’s Advice to Moses: Legal Systems in Egypt and Mesopotamia
Z. Edinger, Shamash

In the opening narratives of this week’s *parashah* we find that Moses, the leader of the nation, serves as the sole judge for the entire population. Every dispute was heard personally by Moses and people came to him from “*morning unto evening*” seeking instruction and justice in every matter. Seeing this, Jethro tells Moses explicitly “*It is not good , this thing you are doing: You will certainly wear yourself out, both you and the nation with you, for it is too difficult a thing for you to do alone.*” Jethro then suggests an entirely new legal system for the people. Moses would serve as the law-giver, acting as the one and only direct intermediary between God and Israel. He would disseminate the laws and statutes to the people. Just and impartial leaders would be identified from among the entire nation (not merely the priests) and appointed to serve as judges in a hierarchical system where simple cases could be dealt with quickly (at any time) by the lowest level courts and only the most difficult cases would be brought up to Moses himself. Jethro’s system is adopted in full by Moses.

In ancient Egypt the judicial system was not a distinct area of government. There were no independent judges and there is no real Egyptian word for judge, instead the judge and vizier were one in the same function. Cases were heard in front of local tribunals which included elders or priests but which was presided over by the vizier or his messengers. While Pharaoh was the chief judicial authority, he delegated this authority, as well as almost all administrative functions, to his chief vizier. The chief vizier was judge over six great houses (geographic divisions,) each of these houses had lesser officers and administrators. One of the more famous inscriptions found from ancient Egypt is that of the *Weni* – a general and governor of upper Egypt during the 6th dynasty (about 2,300 BCE!) – in this inscription Weni describes how he rose through the administrative ranks of the Pharaoh *Pepi I*, until “*His majesty appointed me chief judge over Hierakonpolis. I listened to cases, being alone the Chief-judge, concerning every private matter and [every case] connected with the name of the king, with the royal harem and the 6 great houses.*”

The vizier *Rekmire* was grand vizier under the Pharaohs Tutmoses III and Amenhotep II (18th dynasty, about 1,500 BCE, this is relatively close in time to the period of the Exodus) inscriptions from his tomb describe many of his duties and functions: As grand vizier, he gave daily reports to the Pharaoh, and was responsible for the entire judicial system of Egypt. “*One shall put every petition in writing - every petition to the king shall be reported to him* (the vizier.)” Real estate disputes were heard by the vizier, if the dispute was local a hearing was held promptly, however, if the dispute came from more distant land – a messenger was sent and a three month stay was enacted for the case to be adjudicated. Regarding wills and estate issues, “*Every property list is brought to him (the vizier) and it is he who seals it.*”

(continued on side panel)



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL
The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Shabbat Yithro

January 29-30, 2016

Hertz Pentateuch: Torah Reading: p. 288; Haftarah: p. 302
Kaplan Living Torah: Torah Reading: p. 344; Haftarah: p. 1114

CANDLE LIGHTING | 4:51 pm

MINHAH | 5:00 pm

FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS | following evening services | Rabbi Soloveichik gives a talk on “The *Habdalah* Candle vs. the Olympic Torch” | 2015-2016 Season Sponsored by the Julis Family

ZEMIROT | 8:15 am | Main Sanctuary

SHAHARIT (NISHMAT) | 9:00 am | Rabbi Soloveichik will deliver a lecture after services on “The First American Consul to Jerusalem: An Unbelievable Tale of History, Religion and Jewish Law”

WOMENS’ SERVICE | 9:00 am | Little Synagogue

TOT SHABBAT | Ages 0-4 | 10:00 am | Levy Auditorium

YOUTH GROUPS | Ages 5-12 | 10:00 am | Children’s Library

JR. CONGREGATION | Ages 5-12 | 10:30 am | Levy Auditorium

KIDDUSH LUNCHEON | Levy Auditorium | Sponsored by Liliane Marks and family in memory of her husband, Neville Marks

TEEN CLASS | Seth Haberman on the topic “What are the origins of BDS and what can we do about it?” | 3:45 pm | For high school students | Held at the Haberman home, 1 W 85th St Apt. 11C

SEUDAH SHELISHIT AND SPECIAL SHABBAT AFTERNOON SHIUR | Rabbi Soloveichik on the topic “When Abarbanel Came to Venice: Yitro and Jewish Political Thought” | 3:45 pm | Spring semester is sponsored by Lewis Lipsey

MINHAH/ARBIT | 4:45 pm

HABDALAH | 5:39 pm

Weekday Service Times

Mornings: Sun. 8:00 AM, Monday-Thur. 7:15 AM

Evenings: Sun., Mon., Tues., Wed., Thurs.: 6:30 PM (Arbit only)

UPCOMING EVENTS AND INITIATIVES

Emergency Bone Marrow Drive
Sunday, January 31 | 11:30 am - 3:30 pm
At Lincoln Square Synagogue (180 Amsterdam Ave)
The mother of members of the UWS community needs a bone marrow transplant as soon as possible! The family has teamed up with Gift of Life registry to hold a bone marrow drive, which only entails a cheek swab. If you are between 18 and 44 years old, it is free! Please come and help save a life!

Young Couples and Families Shabbat Luncheon Fiesta
Saturday, February 6 Following Morning Services
DEADLINE THIS TUESDAY
Young Couples and Families are invited to join Rabbi Soloveichik for this fun Mexican-themed Shabbat luncheon. We've got a great group of young couples and families who enjoy getting together and inviting their friends to experience the best of Shearith Israel. Childcare will be provided. To register, go to shearithisrael.org/young-couples-and-families-luncheon by Tuesday, February 2.

Communities of Character:
A Conversation with David Brooks
Monday, March 7 | 7:00 pm
Temple Emanu-El's Skirball Center: 1 E. 65th St.
Join UJA-Federation of New York, Shearith Israel and Manhattan synagogues for a community-wide conversation about the bonds that unite us in an increasingly divisive time. David Brooks will share his reflections on character, gratitude, and how we can magnify the best in ourselves and in each other. Mr. Brooks will also engage in dialogue with UJA-Federation CEO Eric Goldstein about finding common ground and fostering collective purpose. \$18 per person (Your gift represents a charitable contribution to UJA-Federation of New York.) To register, visit ujafedny.org/uja-david-brooks.

HerringFest!
Rabbi Meir Soloveichik
Tuesday, March 8 | 7:00 pm
HerringFest! will take place during Adar, the joyous month associated by our sages with the constellation of "dagim," or fish. Participants will be able to sample a dazzling variety of ways in which the herring can be enjoyed. Featuring a short shiur by Rabbi Soloveichik, HerringFest! is sure to be an unforgettable culinary experience of Shearith Israel's Dutch and Jewish heritage. Take advantage of our early-bird rates! Go to shearithisrael.org/herringfest to register.

The Future Face of Israel: Ethiopian Shabbat Dinner
Friday Night, March 11 | Following Evening Services
Co-sponsored by Chassida Shmella Ethiopian Jewish Community
Operation Moses and Operation Solomon were two massive and miraculous emigrations of Ethiopian Jews to Israel in our time. Learn more about the adaptation and achievements of this last remnant of the Jewish people during this traditional Ethiopian meal, as the generations of Ethiopian Jews celebrate and share stories of their own personal miracles as productive citizens of the Jewish state. Dinner is followed by lectures and Q + A with our speakers, former MK Deputy Speaker Pnina Tamano-Shata and Professor Ephraim Isaac. To learn more and to register, go to shearithisrael.org/ethiopianshabbat.

Purim Dinner
Wednesday, March 23
Following 7:30 pm Megillah reading
Immediately following the *Megillah* reading, registered guests are invited to a festive family-style meal in Levy Auditorium. In addition to a tasty dinner, guests will enjoy our annual children's costume parade. Register for our Purim celebration at shearithisrael.org/purimdinner.

WEEKDAY JUDAIC EDUCATION

For schedule and class details go to:
shearithisrael.org/content/judaic-education-and-major-lectures

- Sunday*
- ◇ **The Book of Kings** | Rabbi Hidary | 8:40 am
No class this week. Spring Semester begins on Feb 7.
 - ◇ **Saadia Gaon's Book of Beliefs and Opinions** | Sjimonden Hollander | 9:30 am
No class this week.

- Monday*
- ◇ **Second Temple Jewish History** | Rabbi Hidary | 7:00 pm
No class this week. Resumes on Feb 8.
 - ◇ **Bet Midrash** | Rabbi Hidary, Phil Getz, Dr. Josh Eisen, Rabbi Ira Rohde, Meira Wokenfeld | 8:00 pm
No class this week. Resumes on Feb 8.

- Tuesday*
- ◇ **Rambam's Mishneh Torah** | Rabbi Hidary | 7:45 am
 - ◇ **Feasts and Fasts: The Festivals in Jewish Thought- A Class for Women** | Rabbi Soloveichik | 9:00 am
 - ◇ **Talmud Class: Tractate Rosh Hashana and the Philosophy of Jewish Time** | Rabbi Soloveichik | 8:00 pm |
Spring semester sponsored by Gregory Bell

Please consider sponsoring a class. Go to:
shearithisrael.org/sponsoraaclass

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:
Tuesday, February 9 at 11:00 am