

## Justifying Strong Authority and its Centralization

There are a number of lessons taught by the placement of the Golden Calf story in the midst of the narratives of Moses' ascent upon the Mountain receiving Tablets of Law and Instructions for the Tabernacle. What most stands out to me is that the story brings out the need for a strong, regular and disciplined leadership. The simple (and democratic) "will of the People" cannot be trusted. Bending to the "will of the people" leads Aaron astray, as later the Northern Kingdom's display of a more democratic spirit and lack of a regular Ruling House led them astray. It also is the path to rudderless weakness.

In the Torah, regular centralized is vested in the priestly clans of the Levites and Kohanim, led by Moses and Aaron. It is true that Aaron's sin is great, but his problem is interpreted as not having been firm enough. The story serves to justify the need for a Tabernacle served by dedicated clans of regular servants, under a strict discipline. This is opposed to the distribution of those privileges among the different tribes, as seems to have been done in the Northern Kingdom. In the North there was more decentralization, dispersion, and deregulation of political and religious leadership among the tribes of Israel, perhaps via the firstborn or princes of each tribe.

But was it really necessary and justified for Moses and the Levites to have killed three thousand men of Israel in reestablishing order and their authority? Weren't those measures; essentially igniting a civil conflict among brother Israelites, too severe? Well, of course, this would indeed serve to justify the Judean war against the North which used Golden Calves in their worship. But how does the Torah itself justify this harsh measure? The worship of the Calf may indeed have been a form of idolatry, but Moses had already burnt and ground the Golden Calf to dust, combined it with water and made the people drink it! The drinking of this seems to have been a combination of despising the former object of worship as well as making Israel ingest a Cursing Potion, which may have sickened and killed Israelites unfaithful to God just as the Cursing Potion drunk by the unfaithful adulteress sickened and killed her. But if Moses had indeed made the people drink the gold potion, then some degree of authority and order must have already been re-established! What then does the text mean when it says that Moses still saw the disorder which Aaron had sown? Was the killing of the three thousand just a punishment? Would that have justified it?

The new JPS Translation understands 32:25 as follows: "Moses saw that the people were out of control – since Aaron had let them get out of control – so that they were a menace to any who might oppose them." More than most other translations, this interpretation makes clear that there was still opposition and revolt which had to be put down. Aaron himself may have acquiesced to the Calf under the threat of a menacing mob. And Aaron's acquiescence and failure to oppose them had only increased and worsened the menace of the will of the unruly mob, so that they would now be incapable of following any leadership whatsoever, or at least any consistent leadership and rule. Moses and Aaron, allied with the Levite clans which they led, still had to take drastically strong measures to put down the menace and revolt or potential revolt of the crowd. Without the submission and obedience of the crowd to a stable and disciplined leadership, Israel would have no chance of success. In the Torah that leadership is symbolized in the Levitical leadership of Moses and Aaron and justifies the central role of the Tabernacle. Even the Tablets of Law and a Written Code of Law, keeping the people free from enslavement to tyranny, were of little use unless there was regular and proper recognition and submission to stable authorities to execute and administer those laws.



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL  
The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

## Shabbat Ki Tissa

February 18-19, 2022 | 18 Adar I, 5782

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### SCHEDULE

**Candle Lighting** | 5:16 pm

**Friday Evening Services** | 5:15 pm

**Friday Night Lights will return next week.**

**Zemirot** | 8:30 am

**Shahrit** | 9:00 am

**Youth Groups** | 10:00 am | Fidanque Room | Supervised by a Teen Leader

**Kiddush** | Outdoors | following services

**Shabbat Afternoon Class will return next week.**

**Shabbat Afternoon Services** | 5:15 pm

**Habdala** | 6:06 pm

**Virtual Habdala** | 6:20 pm | Rev. Z. Edinger

### Weekday Service Times

#### Morning Services

Sunday & Monday (Presidents Day): 8:05 am | Tuesday-Friday: 7:05 am

#### Evening Services

Sunday-Thursday (Minha/Arbit): **5:15 pm**

### Presidents Day Weekend Schedule Changes

- Rabbi Soloveichik's *Friday Night Lights* and Shabbat Afternoon Class will resume next week.
- Our office will be closed on Monday for Presidents Day.
- Morning Services on Monday will be at 8:05 am.

**NEW! We ask ALL congregants to submit our new Vaccine/Booster Status form, available at: [shearithisrael.shulcloud.com/form/vaccine-status](https://shearithisrael.shulcloud.com/form/vaccine-status).**

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## COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

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Mazal tob to **Laurie & Dr. Eli Bryk** upon the birth of a grandson, born to their children, Jacki & Jeff Karsh of Los Angeles.

Mazal tob to **Judi & Alan Eisenman** on the birth of a grandson, Gavriel Isaac, born to their children, Liz & Marc Guttman. Mazal tob to big sisters Maayan and Lielle, and to all the uncles, aunts and cousins.

**Valerie & Daniel Feder** are pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter, Rebecca, to Jacob Zarzecki.

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## COVID-19 Reminders

- We are now back to **Mask-Optional** for *Friday Night Lights* and the **Shabbat Afternoon Class** (which will resume next week).
  - For now, we are still **Mask-Required** at Shabbat prayer services.
  - **Up-to-date vaccination/boosters are required for all** - visit [shearithisrael.shulcloud.com/form/vaccine-status](https://shearithisrael.shulcloud.com/form/vaccine-status) to submit your latest information to help us maintain our database.
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## COMING UP

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### Sisterhood Mishloah Manot Project

**Place your order by: Midnight on Thursday, February 24**

Send Mishloah Manot to other members of our congregation. Your friends can receive either a card or a package\* of Purim treats (their choice of which they want), letting them know you included them on your list.

**All you have to do is log in to your ShulCloud member account, fill out the online form, and pay by credit card. (You MUST be logged in to be able to view the form.)**

*To select recipients, visit [shearithisrael.org/sisterhoodmanot](https://shearithisrael.org/sisterhoodmanot).*

*\*Note that packages are only available for pickup at the Synagogue; there will be no package delivery.*

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### Parent-Child Learning - Torah & S'mores!

**Led by our Parnas, Louis Solomon**

**Saturday Night, March 12 | 7:00 pm**

*For elementary school children and their parents or grandparents*

*To register, visit [shearithisrael.org/csiyouth5782](https://shearithisrael.org/csiyouth5782).*

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## THIS SUNDAY

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### "The Old Country To Ellis – The Untold Story"

***A Presentation by Leah Kaplan***

*Sponsored by the Sisterhood*

**Sunday, February 20 | 4:00 pm | Refer to our emails for registration**

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## COMING UP

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*With blood donations still in short supply, join Shearith Israel in conjunction with Lincoln Square Synagogue, Ohav Zedek, & Or Zarua for another:*

### **Blood Drive for the NY Blood Center**

**February 27 | Held at Lincoln Square Synagogue (180 Amsterdam Ave)**

***Saving a life takes just an hour of your time!***

Refer to our emails to schedule your donation for February 27th.

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*The Sisterhood Presents:*

### **Judaica Papercuts with Artist Dena Levie**

**Saturday Night, March 5 | 8:00 pm | On Zoom**

Join the Sisterhood on Zoom as professional artist Dena Levie helps participants create their very own Judaica-themed piece of papercut art.

This is a great activity to do on your own, or with kids or grandkids old enough to handle an exacto knife! And, because it's on zoom, you can do it from anywhere. Dena will give a virtual tour of her studio, explaining the principles involved in her artwork, and will help us all learn a new, fun skill for creating beautiful objects.

*Register at [shearithisrael.org/papercutting](https://shearithisrael.org/papercutting).*

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## MARK YOUR CALENDARS: Festive Purim Dinner Returns!

**Catered by Sherry Herring**

*with a spirited conversation between*

***Shearith Israel's herring aficionado, Rabbi Meir Soloveichik,  
and Sherry Herring's New York rep, Alejandro Benchimol***

**Purim Evening, March 16 | After Megillah Reading & Children's Activity**

We are delighted to be offering this fun, in-person, communal meal. And what better time than Purim to finally see each other's punim? This year's Purim Dinner will be catered by Sherry Herring, the hot new kosher Upper West Side outpost of the famed Tel Aviv hotspot.

Details forthcoming - stay tuned!