

Final Accounting: Assuring We All Count & Count Upon Each Other

The final Parasha of Exodus often is combined with other portions. But during this leap-year it comes unaccompanied, so it behooves us to give it the attention which is its rightful due. It is called “Pekude,” or more properly “Eilleh Phequde” - “These are the Counts.” Those are the first two words, and the term used can have several meanings. Here the general sense we get from the context is that this last section of Exodus, the conclusion of the building of the Tabernacle, is meant to be a final “accounting” of the valuables collected from the people and used for the construction. Certainly that understanding lies behind the choice of I Kings 7:40-50 as our haftarah, which lists amounts of metal used in building Solomon’s Temple. There are translations which similarly emphasize that the tally here in Exodus is largely meant to cover the weight of the metal used, the silver, gold, and copper/bronze mentioned at the end of Ch. 38. However, 38:23 and Ch. 39 list precious linens and dyed woolen fabrics used, as well as an inventory of precious stones. Hence we find other English versions which translate our Parasha’s name as “inventory,” “records,” “number of things,” “sum of the Tabernacle,” “amounts of materials,” “computations,” etc. Thus we can understand the Parasha’s intent and its placement at the end of Exodus as giving a final summary accounting, a bookkeeping, a taking stock and inventory. Of course, an accounting summary alone would have made a rather dull and anticlimactic ending, a dullness compounded by the rather boring lists of instructions for the Tabernacle which preceded. Recapturing our interest, therefore, Exodus 39:33 to the end reverts to narrative, telling the story of actually setting up and assembling all of the pieces of the Tabernacle together and using it in the offering of the first sacrifices. This leads to a memorable dramatic conclusion, the cloud or pillar of fire coming down to cover the Tent of Meeting and the Presence of the Lord filling the Tabernacle and similarly henceforth when they were to encamp, and the cloud’s lifting when it was time to journey on.

Our Parasha states that gold and bronze used in the sanctuary were donated through general voluntary offerings, which are described as “wave offerings” or “heave offerings” of some kind. The silver, however, came from the census of men twenty and up, those of fighting age. The earlier instructions are here repeated, that no more and no less than a “split”-shekel (half-shekel) per man was to be given. Although we don’t know that coinage was used, silver was certainly more readily used as currency than other metals, and this “split shekel” seems to have been a readily-available denomination of currency or weight. This served to give some sense of equalizing the responsibilities and privileges involved in the Tabernacle among the People as a whole. It also, of course, served as an indirect but highly documentable and reliable method of taking a census, which in the Bible was always a highly-charged matter.

Over and over during the COVID-19 epidemic I have pondered the avoidance of taking a direct census in the context of the prevalent custom not to count the members of a minyan directly. Unfortunately, many synagogues have had to abrogate such customs in making sign-up sheets in advance for minyanim. Of course, we live in a modern age, and numbers of people are important. But putting down names in advance on spreadsheets numbered one through ten or twelve I found particularly objectionable and of misleading reliability. Rev. Zachary Edinger humored me by making lists substituting numbers with ten-word Hebrew phrases customarily used for circumlocution of the minyan-counting prohibition. It’s not that I superstitiously worry about the Evil Eye. Rather, I view these practices as stemming from the inherent dangers of using numbers as an estimate of strength among people. A people’s strength and wealth is not nearly gauged by their numbers and accounts. Overconfidence based upon numbers of sign-ups on a list, or reliance upon the leaders or the wealthy, can lead to a lack of volunteer effort. A community which much rely upon pre-counted lists shows that it cannot count upon the strength of its members to come through. The most important accounting that we can have is that we each count upon the collective strength of our fellows. Unfortunately, our mathematically based, secular “scientific” society does not understand that. The genius of the equalization of the half-shekel contributions of silver was that it alleviated the “accounting issues” by showing in the process that we all count and count upon each other.



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL

The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Shabbat Pekude

March 4-5, 2022 | 2 Adar II, 5782

SCHEDULE

Hertz: p. 385 | Haftarah: p. 382

Kaplan: p. 480 | Haftarah: p. 1134

Candle Lighting | 5:33 pm

Friday Evening Services | 5:45 pm

Friday Night Lights | Rabbi Soloveichik | Following services | *2021-22 season sponsored by the Julis-Rabinowitz family*

Zemirot | 8:30 am

Shahrit | 9:00 am | *Following the reading of Pekude, the congregation recites:*

זָקַק וְנִתְחַזַּק - הִזְקִינוּ וְנִתְחַזְקוּ לְפָנֵי ה' הַיּוֹמָיִם לֵה

Be Strong and let us be Strengthened - Be strong, and let your heart take courage, All ye that hope for the LORD

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

Kiddush | Outdoors | following services | *Sponsored by Naftali & Zoya Raynes Friedman, Avi & Samuel, in honor of Rabbi Ira Rohde*

Shabbat Afternoon Class | Rabbi Soloveichik | 4:45 pm

Shabbat Afternoon Services | 5:30 pm

Habdala | 6:24 pm

Virtual Habdala | 6:45 pm | Rev. Z. Edinger

Weekday Service Times

Morning Services

Sunday: 8:05 am

Monday-Friday: 7:05 am

Evening Services

Sunday-Thursday (Minha/Arbit): **5:45 pm**

Masks are now optional in designated areas.

To read our important policy updates, visit shearithisrael.org.

THIS SHABBAT

He's LIVE AGAIN FROM SHEARITH ISRAEL...

Friday Night Lights

This Friday | IN PERSON with Rabbi Meir Soloveichik

Following 5:45 pm Evening Services with the Shearith Israel Choir

2021-2022 Season of Friday Night Lights is sponsored by the Julis-Rabinowitz family

Shabbat Afternoon Class

Rabbi Meir Soloveichik

This Shabbat | IN PERSON | 4:45 pm | 45 minutes before Evening Services

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

We mourn the passing of our member, **Claude Sasson**.

Condolences to **Meryl Jaffe** on the passing of her mother, Solange Rosenblum Jaffe.

Condolences to **Alan Schechter** on the passing of his father, Isidore Schechter.

Condolences to **Anwar Suleiman**, on the passing of his mother, Sophie Suleiman.

URGENT CAMPAIGN

for the JEWS OF UKRAINE

Donate by THIS Monday, March 7, and your gift will be matched!

Please support Shearith Israel's campaign to assist the Jewish communities of Ukraine.

Thanks to an anonymous matching donor, all your contributions will be doubled.

Our collective funds will be sent to the Federation of Jewish Communities of Ukraine, which is trying to raise \$3.6 MM for over 30,000 packages of emergency food supplies and essential needs across 180 communities in Ukraine.

To contribute, visit shearithisrael.shulcloud.com/form/rdj.

COMING UP

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.

COMING UP

Virtual Jr. Congregation with Mrs. Lisa Rohde

THIS Sunday, March 6 | 9:30 am | On Zoom

For the zoom link, please contact Mrs. Lisa Rohde at lrohde.csi@gmail.com.

The Sisterhood Presents:

Judaica Papercuts with Artist Dena Levie

THIS 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!

Register at shearithisrael.org/papercutting.

Are You Ready For Purim?

Wednesday evening, March 16-Thursday, March 17

- **Purim Dinner!**
- **Kids Activity!**
- **Matanot L'Ebyonim!**
- **Megillah Readings** - including Women's Reading and a Family-Friendly Outdoor Reading on Purim Morning!

Visit shearithisrael.org/purim5782 to submit your Vaccine Status form to attend Megillah, RSVP your kids for their activity, and sign up for our herring-tacular dinner!

SIGN UP NOW!

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 relaxed, 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.

Register at shearithisrael.org/purimdinner5782.
