

The Spiritual Aspect of Disease

Rituals of purification take up a good part of Parashat Metzora. These rituals are separate from and in addition to the basic laws for determining purity or impurity via observation and/or evaluation. The simplest form of this applied to “leprous” clothing at the end of last week’s Parasha: After washing out a problematic “leprous” spot so it is not problematic (and if that is not sufficient the problematic spot may be torn out), the garment is simply given an additional washing afterwards for the sake of ritual purification.

For “leprous” persons, however, as well as for the “leprous” habitations inside which people dwell, there is a much more elaborate purification ritual. Indeed, the initial evaluation of leprosy, the procedures to be followed in isolating the leper, subsequent re-evaluations and even how to judge whether the leprosy has been healed were mostly covered in last week’s reading. The detailed description in our Parasha is largely given over to the “purification ritual” alone. In this “ritual” pre-occupation Leviticus betrays its focus upon sacrificial types of ritual. But are there perhaps other reasons we can give as to why this additional step of a “purification” ritual is called for?

Of course, making the person wait for a purification ritual does serve as an additional precaution, and in matters of disease or the spread of contagion from person to person or in inside spaces, fixed-term waiting periods are in order as a precaution against recurrence. But more importantly, it would seem, the need for a “ritual,” particularly a sacrificial ritual, has to do with acknowledging “spiritual” dimensions of human illness. There are a number of these “spiritual” dimensions, which include feelings of sin and guilt, as well as relief and gratitude, feelings of spiritual pollution as well as repentance and being cleansed. I must say that the connection between the “spiritual” aspects of disease and the physical aspects are “fuzzy” and must remain so. I’d suggest that the “fuzziness” of the connection has something to do with the “disconnect” between Parashat Tazria and Parashat Metzora. In Parashat Tazria there seems no hint that any sacrifices are necessary. The priest simply inspects, and if the wound is healed the priest declares the patient to be pure. Parashat Metzora seems to be a kind of recap of Tazria’s laws from a “sacrificial” point of view, a view which connects to the more spiritual aspect of disease, which must be addressed from a somewhat independent and disconnected “fuzzy” angle. This “spiritual” aspect of human disease affects the human collective as well as the individual. It is interesting that “leprosy” affects the human home and habitation, and that this type of leprosy seems more connected with “spiritual” purification as well as quarantine. In sum, one cannot demonstratively “prove” connections between spirit and human disease. Nevertheless, human disease does have spiritual dimensions, which must be addressed separately from the physical ones.



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL
The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Shabbat Metsora-HaGadol
April 8-9, 2022 | 8 Nisan, 5782

SCHEDULE

Consecration Anniversary of Second Mill Street Synagogue (1818)

Hertz: p. 470 | Haftarah: p. 1005

Kaplan: p. 568 | Haftarah: p. 1288

Candle Lighting | 7:10 pm

Friday Evening Services | 7:00 pm

Zemirot | 8:30 am

Shahrit | 9:00 am

Youth Shabbat Program | 10:00 am | Meet up in the Fidanque Youth Room | *Led by our new Youth Directors, Gabi & Raph!*

Kiddush | Levy | following services | *Kiddush Sponsor: Elana, Zachary, and Mendel Gorden, in memory of Minna M. Eisenstein, Belle H. & Samuel M. Cohen, Sydney Gorden; Yayin L'kiddush sponsor: Faith Fogelman*

Shabbat HaGadol Derasha | Rabbi Meir Soloveichik | 6:00 pm

The Perpetual Passover of Private Schulman:

A Tale of WWII and Eternity

Shabbat Afternoon Services | 7:00 pm

Habdala | 8:06 pm

Weekday Service Times

Morning Services

Sunday: 8:05 am | Monday-Friday: 7:05 am

Evening Services

Sunday-Thursday (Minha/Arbit): 6:30 pm

PESAH AT SHEARITH ISRAEL

Check out shearithisrael.org/pesah5782 for all our Pesah offerings!

Shabbat HaGadol Derasha
Rabbi Meir Soloveichik
THIS Shabbat, April 9 | 6:00 pm
(followed by evening services) | For vaccinated only

The Perpetual Passover of Private Schulman:
A Tale of WWII and Eternity

Sell Your Hametz
(Deadline: Midnight THIS Wednesday, April 13)

If you would like to appoint Rabbi Meir Soloveichik as agent to sell your Hametz before Pesah, please fill out the online form at shearithisrael.org/hametz.

Maot Hittim

We invite you to fulfill the mitzvah of Maot Hittim through Shearith Israel's Rabbi's Discretionary Fund at shearithisrael.org/maothittim.

Passover Food Drive

Through Thursday, April 14

Drop off your Hametz and your kosher-for-Passover goods in the ball outside the Levy Auditorium

Thirty percent of Jewish households in NYC are currently living near or below the poverty line. With the ongoing pandemic and surging food prices, food drives are more important than ever.

We're partnering with City Harvest to help feed our neighbors in need during Passover - drop off your contributions right at the synagogue!

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Welcome to our new dynamic Youth Directors duo,
Gabi Chutter-Alcables & Raph Alcables!

Gabi & Raph will be leading our Shabbat Youth Program this week, starting at 10:00 am, and we can't wait for all the amazing youth programs they have in store for us!

Got an idea for a youth activity? Want to welcome Gabi & Raph to the Shearith Israel family? Contact them at youth@shearithisrael.org!

COMING UP

In partnership with The Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood & Kehila Kedosha Janina
A Yom HaShoah presentation

**The Orphan Child of Holocaust Studies:
The Romaniote and Sephardic Jews of Greece**
Wednesday, April 27 | 7:00 pm (following 6:30 pm evening services)
Presented by Marcia Haddad Ikononopoulos, Museum Director, Kehila Kedosha Janina

Ms. Haddad Ikononopoulos, an expert on Greek Jewry, will present, with an audio-visual presentation using historic images, the devastating story of the Greek Jews, close to 90% of whom perished in the Shoah. These vibrant communities had a unique culture that was nearly eradicated. The survivors were determined to revive their language, music, cuisine, and family values, and do so with the support of institutions such as The Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood and Kehila Kedosha Janina.

Register at shearithisrael.org/yom-bashoah5782.

Shearith Israel Chorale

Wednesdays | 7:00-8:15 pm | Led by Hazzan Eliot Alderman

Please join us on Wednesday evenings for a new and exciting musical opportunity. Learn to sing pieces from our congregation's musical heritage and beyond. Led by hazzan & choirmaster Mr. Eliot Alderman of the UK, this new offering is open to anyone with an interest in singing and learning our musical tradition. Sessions are open to all, and last about 75 minutes, with a short break. The ability to read music is a plus but is not required. Performance opportunities will be determined by the progress and wishes of the chorale.

Suggested donation is \$15 per session (or as you are able). Register at shearithisrael.org/chorale.

Mets Game Outing

Sponsored by the Lewin Family

Sunday, May 15 | 1:00 pm | Citi Field

Now that the baseball season is back on schedule, Shearith Israel youth and their families are invited on this highly subsidized trip to watch the Mets play the Mariners – only \$15 a ticket (actual ticket price: \$40)! First come, first served, with priority given to members, while supplies last.

Registration now open at shearithisrael.org/mets.