

(Continued from back panel)

animals. Why insert these *halakhot*, already taught in different form earlier in the Torah, right after this story? And how does it interact with the connection that the midrash makes, of the *mekallel* and the *Lechem haPanim*?

The careful placement of these texts inform us that the cursing of God, with its punishment of death, is parallel to the killing of human life. With the *mekallel* story as a link, these actions are contrasted with the service in the *Mishkan*. Following all of the laws of the *Mishkan*, the *Kohanim*, the vessels and the *avodah*, can all be mistakenly viewed as intrinsically holy-- as things to worship, instead of things to *use in worship* of God. If one views them in this mistaken paradigm, one might think that the worship of God is inherently physical, and thus it is the physical that elevates God, and it is also the physical that can denigrate God. The *mekallel*, according to Vayikra Rabbah, makes this very mistake. If God has to “eat cold bread” then certainly the *avodah* is all a joke! What God would want that?!

In the mindset expressed by this portrayal of the *mekallel*, the physical worship is given an undeserved focus. The core of our *avodah* is not to emphasize the actual physicality of the rites. They are portals to connect us to God, but they are not the destination themselves. When one’s view of God and worship of God is fundamentally erroneous, the ramifications can lead one to misunderstand the relationship with other physical creatures as well. If one can curse God for thinking He is disrespected by physical worship, by eating cold bread, God is brought down to the level of Man. When one believes that Man is equal with the Creator, then God’s other creations become less important, are suddenly beneath that person. This mistaken view can lead to the abuse and disregard for the sanctity of the Other in one’s life. The verses warning against taking another human’s life are inextricably bound with the way we regard God, and the way we regard our worship of Him. When God’s *name* is denigrated, so is human life. When God is elevated, we elevate the lives of others living amongst us as well. The *mekallel* reminds us how powerful our perspectives can be; warning us against deprecation, and urging us towards elevation.

**COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*Welcome* to Ilana Gadish, our Yoezet Halakha, who is joining us for services this Shabbat morning, has authored this week’s debar torah, and will be introduced and available to meet you in person during Kiddush

**The Mekalel and his Neighbors: Midrashic Architecture**  
**Ilana Gadish, Yoezet Halakha**

The Sages who authored the midrashim would have been great architects and interior designers. They are so often concerned with placement of texts, why words or topics are arranged in certain ways, why certain portions of the Torah are juxtaposed to others. *Parashat Emor* is a paradigmatic example of unusual and perplexing placements of topics, and the accompanying midrashic response. The parasha outlines the rules and restrictions of the *Kohanim* in their service in the *Mishkan*, guidelines for bringing sacrifices, the Shabbat and holiday offerings, the kindling of the *Ner Tamid* (eternal flame) and *Menorah* lamp, and the twelve loaves of the *Lechem Ha’panim*, the show-bread. Immediately following the verses discussing the *Lechem Ha’panim*, the Torah relays the story of the *mekallel*- the blasphemer. What connection does the *mekallel* have with the *Lechem Ha’panim*?

Vayikra Rabbah, the aggadic midrash on the book of Vayikra, gives three reasons for this peculiar juxtaposition, based on the opening words of the sentence- “*vayetze ben isha yisraelit* -- and the son of an Israelite woman went out”- focusing on the word “*vayetze* -- went out” (Vayikra Rabbah 32:3). The midrash asks: “*Me’heichan yatza?* From where did he go out?” The second of these three responses of the midrash reads as follows:


“He ‘went out’ from the section of verses in the Torah above, as it is written ‘and you shall take fine flour and bake it into twelve loaves’ (Vayikra 24:5). He [the blasphemer] said: It is customary for a king to eat warm bread. Would he eat it cold?”

According to the author of this midrash, the placement of the story of the blasphemer comes immediately after the description of the *Lechem haPanim*, precisely because it is what motivated the blasphemer to curse God. Vayikra Rabbah 32:3 explains further by citing a Mishnaic source in Menahot 11:9, which dictates that the *Lechem HaPanim* was not eaten before the 9th day after being baked for the *Mishkan*, and no later than the eleventh day. The midrash reveals the motivation: “What kind of God accepts cold, stale bread as an offering!?” muses the *mekallel*. The cursing of God, according to this opinion in the midrash, is based in mockery and disdain for the *halakhot* of the different offerings in the *Mishkan*, viewing them as sub-par.

At first glance, it seems extreme that an individual would curse God for having cold, not-quite-fresh bread in His Temple, and in return would receive an extreme punishment of death by stoning. What underlies this Midrash? Looking deeper, insight can be found by not just looking at the verses in the previous section of the parasha, but by looking at the verses that follow. Though the Sages of the Midrash did not bring the following verses to underscore their answer, their methodology teaches us to examine the verses that come *after* the story in addition to the preceding ones that they quote. In other words, in order to bolster the midrash, it is not only what precedes the *mekallel* text that informs its story (as the Midrash suggests), but also what follows it.

As soon as the *mekallel* story ends and the ruling of capital punishment for cursing God is given, the next verse abruptly tells us that “If a man strikes down any human being, he shall be put to death” (Vayikra 24:17). This is followed by other legal rulings regarding harming other humans and

(Continued on side panel)



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL  
The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

### Shabbat Emor

May 20-21, 2016

Hertz Pentateuch: Torah Reading: p. 513; Haftarah: p. 528  
Kaplan Living Torah: Torah Reading: p. 610; Haftarah: p. 1172

CANDLE LIGHTING | 7:53 pm  
MINHAH | 6:45 pm

ZEMIROT | 8:15 am | Main Sanctuary  
SHAHARIT (NISHMAT) | 9:00 am | Rabbi Soloveichik will deliver a Pirkei Abot shiur on the topic “From the Mishnah to Moby Dick: The Coffins of Queequeg and Yohanan Ben Zakai”  
TOT SHABBAT | Ages 0-4 | 10:00 am | Levy Auditorium  
YOUTH GROUPS | Ages 5-12 | 10:00 am | Elias Room  
JR. CONGREGATION WITH TORAH READING | Ages 5-12 | 10:30 am | Little Synagogue  
KIDDUSH | Levy Auditorium | *Sponsored by The Hebra Hased V’Amet*

TOPICS IN JEWISH PHILOSOPHY | Rabbi Hidary | 6:45 pm | For high school students | Held at the Hidary home, 1 W 85th St Apt. 6A

SHABBAT AFTERNOON PIRKEI ABOT SHIUR | Rabbi Soloveichik on the topic, “A Terrible Translation: Why 'Pirkei Abot' Does Not Mean 'Ethics of the Fathers'” | 6:45pm | *Spring semester sponsored by Lewis Lipsey*

MINHAH/ARBIT | 7:45 pm  
KETTER SHEM TOB | Rabbi Hidary | Main Sanctuary  
HABDALAH | 8:46 pm

Weekday Service Times  
Morning: Sunday: 8:00 AM; Mon-Fri.: 7:15 AM  
Evenings: Sunday – Thursday: 6:30 PM (Minhah & Arbit)

UPCOMING EVENTS AND INITIATIVES

Annual Pre-Memorial Day Service: Honoring Veterans of the Revolution and Members of the Armed Forces  
This Sunday Morning, May 22 | 10:30 am  
Chatham Square Cemetery

Join us at the Chatham Square Cemetery in Chinatown to honor veterans of the US Armed Forces including members of our congregation who participated in the Revolutionary War. Led by Rabbi Soloveichik, this special service is open to all members of the community (veterans are encouraged to attend.) The cemetery, active from 1682-1828, is located at 55 St. James Place, opposite Chatham Square. For details, please see [shearithisrael.org/chatham-square-service](http://shearithisrael.org/chatham-square-service). If you are still interested in transportation but have missed the sign up deadline, please contact [zedinger@shearithisrael.org](mailto:zedinger@shearithisrael.org) to inquire about space and payment.

Calling all Veterans!

Shearith Israel is honored by our members’ long history of military service – going back to the Revolutionary War! We are currently updating our “honor roll” of veterans for our congregational records. If you or a family member are a veteran or are currently serving in: the United States Armed Services, the IDF, or other military organizations, we would like to know. Please contact Zachary Edinger at [zedinger@shearithisrael.org](mailto:zedinger@shearithisrael.org). Additionally, if you are interested in learning about Shearith Israel’s revival of the “Sephardic Post” of the Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America, please contact [zedinger@shearithisrael.org](mailto:zedinger@shearithisrael.org).

Shabu`ot Public Lecture  
When Jews Owned Slaves: An Often Untold Tale of History, Ritual and Jewish Law  
Saturday Night, June 11 | 11:30 pm

Join us for what has become a popular Shabu`ot night tradition for the greater UWS and UES community. After the talk, guests are invited to mingle over cheesecake.

Register now for PTTTS Hebrew School  
Early bird pricing ends June 1  
Polonies Talmud Torah School, provides children and teens, ages 3-16, with a substantive Jewish education in a positive and engaging environment. Register at [shearithisrael.org/hebrewschool](http://shearithisrael.org/hebrewschool)

Yom Yerushalayim at Shearith Israel  
Sunday Morning, June 5 | Rabbi Meir Soloveichik  
Following 8:00 am morning services, Rabbi Soloveichik will deliver a special shiur in honor of Yom Yerushalayim.

Graduation Kiddush and Scroll of Honor  
Saturday, June 11  
Let’s spread the good news and celebrate the success and accomplishments of all our graduates from pre-school to PhDs! Go to [shearithisrael.org/graduation2016](http://shearithisrael.org/graduation2016) by Wednesday, June 8 to ensure your graduate is listed on our scroll of honor. Even if you cannot attend, consider co-sponsoring our graduation kiddush for just \$36.

Girls’ Megillat Ruth Reading  
First day of Shabuot | Sunday, June 12  
The girls of our synagogue recite Megillat Ruth for the congregation in the Main Sanctuary after services. If your daughter would like to participate, please contact Mrs. Lisa Rohde at [lrohde-csi@yahoo.com](mailto:lrohde-csi@yahoo.com).  
*We are seeking sponsors and contributors for the kiddush in honor of our girls. For more information, contact [breiss@shearithisrael.org](mailto:breiss@shearithisrael.org).*

Contribute to the PTTTS Hebrew School  
Scholarship Fund  
We offer many scholarships to ensure that all qualified applicants can receive a Jewish education. Please consider sponsoring a student for an academic year or semester or contributing to our Hebrew school scholarship fund with a tax deductible contribution of any amount. Go to [shearithisrael.org/hebrew-school-scholarship-fund](http://shearithisrael.org/hebrew-school-scholarship-fund)

WEEKDAY JUDAIC EDUCATION

For details go to: [shearithisrael.org/judaic-education](http://shearithisrael.org/judaic-education)

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.*

Sunday

- ◊ The Book of Kings | Rabbi Hidary | 8:40 am |
- ◊ Saadia Gaon’s Book of Beliefs and Opinions | Sjimon den Hollander | 9:30 am

Don't let us go dry.  
Be a scotch or arak sponsor. To sponsor or contribute go to [shearithisrael.org/scotch-and-arak-sponsorships](http://shearithisrael.org/scotch-and-arak-sponsorships)

Please consider sponsoring a semester or a class. Go to: [shearithisrael.org/sponsoraaclass](http://shearithisrael.org/sponsoraaclass)

Parnas Office Hours  
Louis Solomon would be delighted to meet with you. Please schedule a visit at [parnas@shearithisrael.org](mailto:parnas@shearithisrael.org).

Our next public tour is:  
Wednesday, June 15 at 11:00 am