

## Broadening the Leadership Base

In Numbers Ch. 11 Israel, roused up by a “rabble in their midst,” demanded “meat,” “real” food. Moses knew that the manna miraculously filled their needs and their complaint was superfluous, but Israel’s complaint vexes him nonetheless. In response, Moses cries out: “Where am I supposed to be able to find meat to feed this people?” Their complaint goes on to vex him enough to cause Moses himself to further complain that the leadership of the people which God has thrust upon him is a burden too great to bear; he despairs of being able to effectively lead the people, at least by himself. God answers Moses’ plaint about where to get meat to feed the people with a prophecy that they soon would be glutted with meat, enough to make them puke, a prophecy then fulfilled by the landing of massive flocks of quail, caught and gathered easily, but the eating of which causes them to be plagued with illness, which kills many of those who lusted so after meat. God answers Moses’ complaint that he cannot any longer, at least alone, bear the burden of leadership by making the 70 Elders of the people prophesize, showing that they could serve as prophetic leaders along with Moses, to share the “burden” of leadership with him.

As I would make sense of it, Moses must have viewed the rabble’s list of demands as an oncoming mutiny of Israel against his leadership, a list of demands which Moses despaired of being able to meet, and an oncoming mutiny which Moses consequently despaired of being able to weather or fend off successfully by himself. That is the only way I can explain why Moses sees no other out than to somehow accede to the demands of the rabble for meat, as well as to have other leaders besides himself go along with his leadership, to make his leadership more broadly-based. Both tactical objectives seemed impossible to fulfill: Where the heck was he going to find meat and “real food” in the desert, and how could he make his leadership more broadly-based among the people when leadership was assigned to him alone, through his one-on-one prophetic encounter with God and God’s direct fiat to Moses? The impossibility of meeting both objectives and therefore the assuredness that mutiny was oncoming, to which resistance would be futile, was the reason for Moses’ despair and Moses’ own plaint to God.

After all, if the people’s complaint was worthy of punishment, why didn’t God bring a plague upon the people directly, instead of in this roundabout way, giving them quail first and bringing the plague upon their eating? The answer must be that God agreed to some extent with Moses’ assessment: Announcing and showing that the rabble’s demands would be acceded to and conceding to them to some degree was indeed necessary to avoid mutiny. This is why meat had to be supplied in such plenitude. Why was every member of the cohort of the tribal elders, all seventy of them, given prophesy? Wasn’t Joshua correct in his concern that having so many become prophetic leaders, particularly leaders who remained within the main compound, posed a threat of rivalry to Moses’ leadership? Moses’ answer was that having a plethora of potential prophetic rival leaders was not his concern at this point. The only way to avoid the threat of mutiny, Moses felt, was to make his leadership more broadly-based. Others in prominent positions of power among the people, in this case the seventy tribal elders, had to see what Moses saw and had to hear what Moses heard directly, and the only way to do that was to give them prophesy themselves. Only through that would the elders appreciate and respect Moses’ God-given prophetic mission and a broader base of support could be marshalled for his leadership. The Elders would see that Moses was not a raving madman; that God was directing him through such prophesy as they themselves were experiencing. A Classics professor I’ve read points out that a ‘Council of Elders’ is the forerunner of the institution we now call a ‘Senate,’ a term derived from ‘senior’ or ‘senile’ which started out as a group of the elders of the tribal clans. With the broader backing of such a ‘Senate,’ a mutiny was stopped dead in its tracks. Of course, Joshua too has a point: Moses is exceedingly humble, humble to a fault, as we see in the following chapter with the story of Miriam’s leprosy. Moses himself is indeed found deserving of rebuke by God for not having more fortitude in his mission, for getting so upset, casting doubt upon both his own leadership capacity as well as upon God’s capacity to provide what was needed to avoid or defeat a mutiny. The brazenness of the rabble’s unappreciative and extravagant demands was also indeed worthy of rebuke and punishment, but that would have to wait until afterwards. At the moment of the “quail rebellion,” at least superficially, the People had to be shown that their demands would be taken seriously and met. And Moses’ basic view is vindicated that building a broader base of support for his prophetic leadership mission was at this point crucially necessary.



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL  
The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

## Shabbat Behaalotekha

June 17-18, 2022 | 19 Sivan, 5782

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### SCHEDULE

Hertz: p. 605 | Haftarah: p. 620  
Kaplan: p. 702 | Haftarah: p. 1188

**Virtual Hashcobot** | Rev. Z. Edinger | 6:15 pm

**Candle Lighting** | 8:11 pm

**Friday Evening Services** | 7:00 pm | Main Sanctuary

**Zemirot** | 8:30 am

**Shahrit** | 9:00 am | Paved Paradise

**Youth Program** | 10:00 am | Gabi & Raph | Fidanque Youth Room

**Graduation Kiddush** | following services | Paved Paradise | *See Scroll of Honor for full sponsor and graduate listings - Mazal tob!*

**Young Families Potluck Picnic** | following the Graduation Kiddush  
Paved Paradise | *Thank you to our anonymous sponsor*

**Shabbat Afternoon Class** | 7:25 pm | Rabbi Soloveichik

**Shabbat Afternoon Services** | 8:10 pm

**Shabbat Ends** | 9:12 pm

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### Weekday Service Times

#### Morning Services

Sunday: 8:05 am

Monday-Friday: 7:05 am

#### Evening Services

Sunday-Thursday (Minha/Arbit): 6:45 pm

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## THIS SHABBAT

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### **Graduation Kiddush** Following Morning Services

Celebrate and congratulate our graduates, from pre-school to PhDs!  
Pick up a Scroll of Honor for the full listings.  
Mazal tob to all our grads!

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*Bring your friends!*

### **Young Families Potluck Picnic** Following the Graduation Kiddush *Led by Gabi & Raph*

The weather outside is finally warm!  
To celebrate it we were a bit torn,  
Until we thought of a potluck picnic on Paved Paradise!  
You're in charge of packing all your food - don't worry though, we'll supply the ice!  
We will have games, lots of fun, and a special treat.  
The dessert we are bringing is dairy, so have your meal be anything but meat!

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## LAST CHANCE

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### **Contribute to our Spring Fundraiser!** *Last chance to be recognized in our commemorative booklet - Don't miss out!*

While Rabbi Soloveichik's inspiring lecture series has come to an end, for just a few more weeks, while we prepare the beautiful and content-rich commemorative booklet, our fundraising campaign is still open. Please give as generously as you can.

#### **We are delighted to announce a unique opportunity:**

For this one time, we are making the videostream of Rabbi Soloveichik's final lecture - streamed from *ANU: Museum of the Jewish People* in Israel - available to view through the end of June. Go to our YouTube channel to watch it and share with friends!

## COMING UP

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*Super Soccer Stars & Shearith Israel present*

### **Soccer on Paved Paradise - now with Summer Camp!**

**Ages 1-8 | Paved Paradise, 8 W. 70th Street**

*Refer to our emails for the registration links*

***Members, use our promo code "Shearith15" for a 15% discount!***

Super Soccer Stars in partnership with Congregation Shearith Israel is going to be back for Summer Soccer Camps! Check out the registration links in our emails to find the option that's right for your kids.

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## COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

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We wish **Gabi & Raph**, our Youth Directors, a happy summer and we look forward to their return in the Fall.

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### **Election Results**

Congratulations to the Trustees who have been elected by our Electors to serve for the upcoming three-year term:

**Mr. Michael Lustig**

**Mr. Seth Haberman**

**Mr. David E. R. Dangoor**

**Mr. Avery E. Neumark**

**Ms. Leah Albek**

Thank you to **Mark Tsesarsky** for his service to the Congregation. We look forward to his continued involvement as an Honorary Trustee.

Congratulations to **Louis Solomon, Karen Daar, and Michael Lustig** who were elected by the Trustees to serve again as Parnas and Seganim respectively.

Thank you to **Sarah Gross and Josh Mendes**, who served as Election Inspectors this year.