



Inveighing Against the Genteel, Pampered Life

28 ⁵⁴The most gentle and refined man among you will begrudge his brother, the wife he embraces, and the rest of his children who have survived, ⁵⁵refusing to share with any of them the flesh of his children he will eat because he has nothing left in the siege and distress that your enemy will inflict on you within all your gates. ⁵⁶The most gentle and refined woman among you, so gentle and refined she has not ventured to set the sole of her foot on the ground, will begrudge the husband she embraces and her son and daughter ⁵⁷the afterbirth that comes from between her legs and the children she bears, because she will secretly eat them for lack of anything else in the siege and distress that your enemy will inflict on you within your gates. ⁵⁸If you are not careful to observe all the words of this law which are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name—the LORD your God (Deut. 28:54-58)

As I've repeated ad nauseum to our Bar-Mitzvah Avi, my favorite section in this week's Parasha is the curse of the genteel (the Hebrew term refers to "softness" or "tenderness"), pampered woman. The Torah's curses for both the gentleman as well as the genteel lady mock them for the sheltered life of ease and delicacy they lead, knowing no hardship, which leads them astray from God. In recompensive mockery, their curse is to reach such a stage of ugly "coarseness," and hard "callousness," that not only shall they come to eat the flesh of their own children who die in war and famine, but that their formerly genteel manner shall become so callous that they wouldn't offer any bit of this most gruesome fare to their fellow survivors, jealously hoarding all of the remains for themselves! But the mockery of the genteel, pampered lady goes several steps further:

This insight occurred to me about thirteen years ago, as I tell my students, at a gathering of barefoot runners at the Fulton Street Seaport. Lecturing upon the superb structure of the human foot which God adapted most naturally to supporting the body without need of the elaborate extraneous contrivances we now know as shoes was a religious Christian professor of anatomy at Liberty University in Lynchburg. Of course, this is just as true of the feet of women as well as the feet of men, but this professor paused to remark upon how few women were in attendance and how many more men were interested in barefoot running and barefooting than women. At that point, recalling these verses which I have taught so many times (I taught this parashah to my very first bar-mitzvah student!) I raised my hand. "Of course, it's in the Bible!" – I exclaimed. I explained that the epitome of gentility and delicacy in the pampered, tender woman is mocked as "the woman so delicate and pampered that she has not ventured to set the sole of her foot on the ground!" This particular description of the women lacks any parallel when the Torah similarly mocks the genteel and pampered man! Evidently, Scripture felt that setting his bare sole upon the ground was not nearly as objectionable to men as it was to women. The Talmud amplifies this observation, writing about the high-class wife of a Priest who not only couldn't stand the thought of herself walking barefoot, but couldn't stand the thought of her husband going barefoot, so much so that she provided cloths to line every place her husband would need to walk barefoot in the Temple! Walking barefoot didn't bother her husband, but it was cringe-worthy to his wife!

There are other differences here in the mockery of the genteel woman: She of course has immediate access to her own afterbirth which the man does not. And it's interesting that she is described as eating all of this, perhaps also including her children, "in secret." There is a greater sense of shame for the genteel, noble lady, in her disgrace.

All of this is invective, for men as well as for women, aimed against the genteel, pampered life. While we should aim to be noble, the pampered life of ease is not one of which the Torah approves, and this curse explicitly mocks it. While I wouldn't go as far as Josephus, who likens us Jews to Spartans, it behooves us to remind ourselves how a pampered life of ease can lead us astray, away from the observance of the Torah, as the concluding verse of this passage makes clear.

Shabbat Ki Tabo

September 16-17, 2022 | 21 Elul, 5782

SHABBAT SCHEDULE

Hertz: p. 859 | Haftarah: p. 874
Kaplan: p. 988 | Haftarah: p. 1240

Candle Lighting | 6:45 pm

Friday Evening Services | 6:45 pm | Main Sanctuary

Zemirot | 8:15 am

Shahrit | 9:00 am | Main Sanctuary

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

Kiddush Luncheon | following services | Levy Auditorium | *Sponsored by trustee Zoya Raynes & Naftali Friedman, in honor of Avi's Bar Mitzvah*

Shabbat Afternoon Class | 5:50 pm | Rabbi Soloveichik

Evening Services | 6:35 pm | Main Sanctuary

Habdala | 7:36 pm

Weekday Service Times

Morning Services

Sunday: 8:05 am

Monday-Friday: 7:05 am

Evening Services

Monday-Thursday (Minha/Arbit & Selihot): 6:30 pm

HIGH HOLIDAYS

High Holiday Seating Reservations

For Members & Guests

The deadline to reserve seats has been extended

FINAL DEADLINE: Midnight this Sunday, September 18

Tickets will be sent out by email early next week.

We are offering both Indoor Services in our Main Sanctuary and Outdoor Services next door on Paved Paradise. Both services will be beautiful and uplifting, and Rabbi Soloveichik will be spending time with each and delivering his sermons at both.

To request seats, please visit shearithisrael.org/bh-5783.

Shabbat Teshuba Derasha

Rabbi Meir Soloveichik

Shabbat, October 1 | Following Morning Services

Sponsorship opportunities are available at
shearithisrael.org/events/shabbat-teshuba5783.

Place Your Lulab & Etrog Orders

Deadline: October 2

Purchase your lulab & etrog set through the synagogue at shearithisrael.org/lulab.

COMING UP

Young Families Welcome Back Shabbat Picnic

Shabbat, September 24 | following dairy *kiddush*

Welcome back! Enjoy a potluck picnic on Paved Paradise and share your summer stories. Bring your kids, and have your kids bring their friends!

We'll supply a delicious (dairy) Haagen Dazs dessert, sponsored by the Sherizen family.

RSVP at shearithisrael.org/events/welcome-back-picnic.

THIS SUNDAY

Communal Beth Olam Cemetery Visit (& Tour)

THIS Sunday, September 18

11:00 am departure from Shearith Israel

12:00 noon at Beth Olam Cemetery

2 Cypress Hills Street, Ridgewood (Queens), NY

The registration form is now closed, but if you are still interested in attending, please contact Z. Edinger.

Join the Hebra Hased Va'Amet for our annual visit to Beth Olam Cemetery where members can visit the graves of loved ones before the High Holidays and participate in a memorial service in the Calvert Vaux-designed "metaher house." A highlight of the visit is an illuminating tour given by our sexton, Rev. Zachariah Edinger.

COMING UP

Sisterhood Succah Decoration

Thursday, October 6 | 3:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Friday, October 7 | 8:00 am – 12:00 pm

Sunday, October 9 | 9:00 am – 1:00 pm

This year, we plan to build a beautiful succah in our Elias Room. As always, this succah will be decorated lavishly and lovingly by the Shearith Israel Sisterhood. Teens and adults, women and men, are invited to help decorate in preparation for the Succot Festival. To participate in this fun mitzvah, contact Aimee Margolis and Mrs. Lisa Rohde at lrohde.csi@gmail.com.

We also plan to have our outdoor succah again this year. Young families with children aged 5-12 are especially welcome to come for their own succah decorating project on Paved Paradise! To help decorate this succah, contact csiyouth@shearithisrael.org.

For information on how to financially support our Succah Fund, visit shearithisrael.org/events/sisterhood-succah-decoration.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mazal tob to **Avi Friedman**, upon becoming a Bar Mitzvah. Congratulations as well to his parents, trustee **Zoya Raynes & Naftali Friedman**, and his grandmother, **Rima Raynes**.