

DEBAR TORAH by RABBI ROHDE

The “Harken” Song of Haazinu: Keeping Memory Alive

Therefore write yourselves this song and teach it to the children of Israel, put it in their mouths, so that this song may be a testimony to me among the children of Israel (Deut. 31:19).

This verse is traditionally expounded upon as the Rabbinic source for the precept to write a Sefer Torah. Although in the text itself the “song” refers most literally to the “Haazinu” poem which follows, Haazinu itself serves as a kind of summation poem of Deuteronomy, which itself is a summary review of all rest of the Torah. Further, all of the Torah, while not written in a strictly poetic form like Haazinu, bears traces of poetic language and stylistics, even in the more prosaic passages. And we traditionally treat it as such, referring to its divisions as “verses,” and “chanting,” not just reading them, in patterns of “cantillation.”

Why was the Torah, and particularly Haazinu, written as a “song?” Well, what seems to be the explanation given here is that a poem/song is memorable. If you want to keep some statement in mind, make a refrain, slogan, or jingle about it. Refrains have an impact and come to mind even when there is no written text. And even the beauty of poems when they are written down can be memorable for their style. When there is a “set” written text or score, it facilitates rehearsal by a chorus or congregation. As I’ve often remarked, there are two major song passages in the Torah, the Song of the Sea and the Song of Haazinu. The first is a song of praise, full of feeling. It is more “spontaneous,” Israel “burst into” this song “in the moment,” we are told. The latter song, the Song of Haazinu, we are told in our Parasha, requires careful rehearsal, writing down, and teaching. The truth is that even the former song also probably required rehearsal by Moses and Miriam; it is unlikely that the entire people just spontaneously burst out with the same words. But the Song of the Sea is full of feeling and passion which is hence more “catchy” and easy to motivate a crowd to sing. On the other hand, the Song of Haazinu, like the entire Torah, must be formed as a song because it is about things which people too easily forget!

But writing things as a song is pointless unless it is *sung*. The Song of Haazinu, and the Torah in general, is to be “placed in their mouths.” Although the Song of the Sea is naturally more lively, the “Harken” Song of Haazinu must also “come alive” to be borne in mind by the People. Of course, thanking or praising someone silently “in one’s heart” is not really thanks or praise. Praise or thanks only becomes so when expressed. The same is true about confession, for example, and thanks is indeed a form of confession. But memory, too, must be kept in mind through expression. When I think of what motivated me to pursue the path I chose in life as a Hazzan, a Cantor, a “Sweet Singer in Israel,” and why I insist on making as much of our tradition sung and chanted out loud, I answer that it is only in this way, in “Harkening” to song, that our tradition really comes and stays alive.



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL
The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Shabbat Vayeilekh-Teshuba

September 30-October 1, 2022 | 6 Tishrei, 5783

SHABBAT SCHEDULE

Hertz: p. 887 | Haftarah: p. 891
Kaplan: p. 1018 | Haftarah: p. 1246

Candle Lighting | 6:22 pm

Friday Evening Services | 6:15 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

Shabbat Teshuba Derasha | Rabbi Meir Soloveichik | following services

“Jonah and Ishmael in the Desert”

Thank you to our lecture sponsors. See source sheet for listings.

Kiddush | following the derasha

Shabbat Afternoon Class | 5:30 pm | Rabbi Soloveichik

Evening Services | 6:15 pm | Main Sanctuary

Habdala | 7:11 pm

Weekday Service Times

Mornings:

Sunday: 8:05 am

Monday, Thursday, Friday: 7:05 am

Evenings:

Sunday Minha, Arbit & Selihot: 6:15 pm

Monday & Thursday Minha & Arbit only: 6:15 pm

Kippur begins on Tuesday night. Visit our website for the full schedule.

THIS SUNDAY

Jews in the Gilded Age: A Symposium

October 2 | 10:00 am - 5:15 pm | Center for Jewish History, 15 W 16th St.
40% discount for Shearith Israel participants!

Shearith Israel is a co-sponsor of a major symposium on the Jews in the Gilded Age, hosted by the American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS), to be held at the Center for Jewish History. Rabbi Soloveichik will be on the Closing Panel along with Jonathan Sarna and Adam Mendelsohn.

This day-long symposium will welcome some of American Jewish history's most preeminent scholars as we delve into the history and memory of one of the United States' most complex eras.

For more information and registration, including discounted tickets for Shearith Israel participants, visit shearithisrael.org/events/gilded-age-symposium.

DEADLINE ALERT: This Sunday, October 2

Place Your Lulab & Etrog Orders

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

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

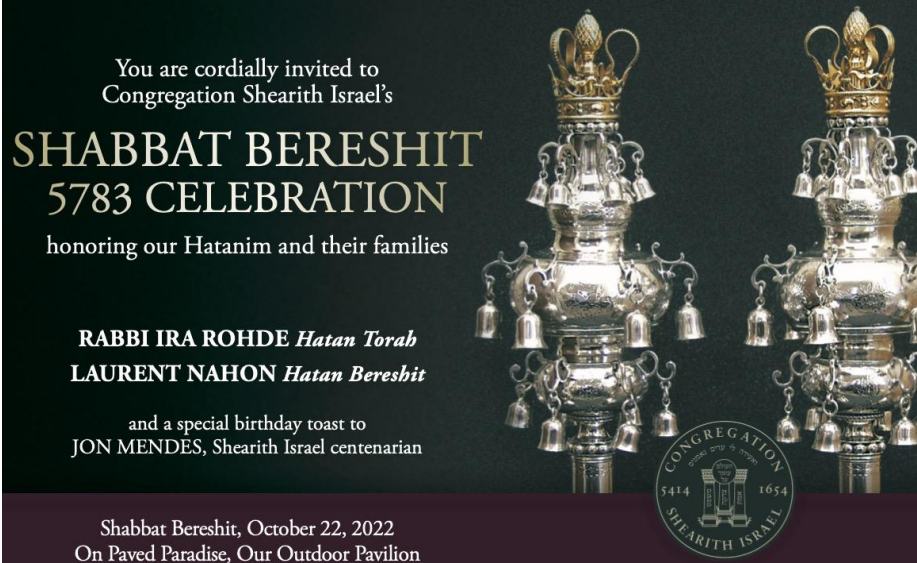
This year, we plan to build a beautiful succah in our Elias Room. As always, this succah will be decorated lavishly and lovingly by the Shearith Israel Sisterhood. Teens and adults, women and men, are invited to help decorate in preparation for the Succot Festival. To participate in this fun mitzvah,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

We also plan to have our Paved Paradise succah again this year, with young families and children aged 5-12 are especially welcome to decorate it! To help decorate this succah, contact csiyouath@shearithisrael.org.

COMING UP

Hatanim Luncheon 5783

Shabbat Bereshit, October 22 | following Shabbat Morning Services



You are cordially invited to
Congregation Shearith Israel's

SHABBAT BERESHIT 5783 CELEBRATION

honoring our Hatanim and their families

RABBI IRA ROHDE *Hatan Torah*
LAURENT NAHON *Hatan Bereshit*

and a special birthday toast to
JON MENDES, Shearith Israel centenarian

Shabbat Bereshit, October 22, 2022
On Paved Paradise, Our Outdoor Pavilion

To register or sponsor, go to shearithisrael.org/hatanim2022.

Meals in the Succah

Registered guests may enjoy their own meals in our Paved Paradise succah. You bring the food; we supply disposables, grape juice, and basic beverages.
Request a spot at shearithisrael.org/events/meals-succah-5783.

Annual Simhat Torah Kiddush & Ice Cream Extravaganza

October 17 | following evening services

Following Simhat Torah evening services, join us for a light dairy kiddush with ice cream, outdoors on Paved Paradise. The kiddush will be free to attend; no registration required!

Sponsorships would be greatly appreciated – to sponsor, visit shearithisrael.org/events/simhat-torah-ice-cream5783.

Ice Cream Extravaganza is sponsored—as always—by the Haberman & Lustig families.