

DEBAR TORAH by RABBI ROHDE

The Classic High Ideals of Biblical Justice

In Ex. 21:37 and 22:1-8, the law of a thief being held liable to pay back double the value of what he stole, or even four and five times the value of oxen and sheep which were stolen and slaughtered before the thief was caught, is grouped along with a series of other difficult-to understand laws. They seem to make sense to me as a unit in a context of a Biblical ideal of trust which the thievery breaches and violates. This severe penalty for cattle-rustling I find intriguing insofar as it would seem fairly easy to steal cattle and livestock, especially when they are out roving on the range. Cattle are, after all, quite ambulatory on their own. They are not always kept within a fixed domain, like objects. Even when they are penned up within a domain they move around and are likely to get to the domain's edges or even escape on their own. And they are likely to be out of the owner's direct sight and supervision, so they are easy to surreptitiously steal. But herders and shepherds rely on a certain code of "brotherly" trust between them. Also, animals were very valuable and nurturing a herd is a long-term project. Hence there is much at stake in the violation of that code of trust, and that is why violations had to be punished severely.

Indeed, any case of stealing involves a violation of trust, but especially the case specifically mentioned in 22:3, where the object was stolen from the domain of a third party to whom the object had been entrusted. The third party had assumed to role of guarantor of the object's safety. It is for violating the trust of the owner in the object's safety that the severe penalty of a doubled restitution payment must be made.

Thus Hebrew law reflects the high ideals of a just society which treats its fellow citizens as entitled to live in "brotherly" safety and security. Laws of the Hebrew slave, as well as lending laws, are further examples of the law requiring "brotherly" treatment of one's fellow citizens.

The lex talionis, even though it cannot be understood literally, expresses another ideal of legal justice, in demanding a restitution which approaches adequacy in compensation for the damage caused. According to the Bible, law should be more than just a convention. God must be recognized as the source of all law, and law must reflect and convey the highest ideals of justice and security within the commonwealth. The law demands an almost "heroic" assumption of responsibility and accountability among fellow citizens, at least in theory, as an ideal to be aspired to. I see the anachronistic language of the lex talionis as well as other laws formulated here as meaning to convey this sense that law must reflect classic high ideals.



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL
The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Shabbat Mishpatim-Shekalim

February 17-18, 2023 | 27 Shebat 5783

SHABBAT SCHEDULE

Hertz: p. 306 | Haftarah: p. 992 | Shekalim: p. 352
Kaplan: p. 356 | Haftarah: p. 1270 | Shekalim: p. 440

Candle Lighting | 5:15 pm

Friday Evening Services | 5:15 pm | Main Sanctuary

Friday Night Lights | following services | Main Sanctuary | 2022-2023
Season sponsored by the Julis-Rabinowitz family

Zemirot | 8:15 am

Shahrit | 9:00 am | Main Sanctuary

Youth Program | 10:00 am

Kiddush | following services | Levy Auditorium | *Scotch sponsored by Margo & Benjamin Suckewer, in memory of Benjamin's mother, Sonia Suckewer*

Shabbat Afternoon Class | 4:25 pm | Rabbi Soloveichik

Evening Services | 5:10 pm | Main Sanctuary

Habdala | 6:05 pm

Rosh Hodesh Adar begins on Monday night.

Weekday Service Times

Mornings:

Sunday & Monday (Presidents Day): 8:05 am

Tuesday-Friday: 7:05 am

Evenings:

Sunday-Thursday: **5:20 pm**

If you can help out and attend minyan, morning or evening, please contact Z. Edinger.

SHABBAT SHEKALIM

During Temple times, the payment of a poll tax of half a shekel by every Jew was called for on the first day of the twelfth month (Adar). Exodus 30:11-16 was added as a reminder on the Sabbath preceding. This is the first of four Sabbaths before Passover with additional Torah readings and special haftarot.

COMING UP

Exclusive Pre-Pesah Tour at the Metropolitan Museum of Art

Led by Rabbi Soloveichik

Sunday Afternoon, March 26

Rabbi Soloveichik will lead a one-of-a-kind tour for a limited number of Shearith Israel sponsors as a special pre-Pesah treat. The Met collection of ancient Egyptian art consists of approximately 26,000 objects of artistic, historical, and cultural importance, dating from the Paleolithic to the Roman period (ca. 300,000 B.C.–A.D. 4th century). More than half of the collection is derived from the Museum's thirty-five years of archaeological work in Egypt, initiated in 1906 in response to increasing Western interest in the culture of ancient Egypt.

*Registration is open to sponsors only (\$180 per person) at
shearithisrael.org/met-tour23*

Young Professionals Shabbat Dinner

with Rabbi Soloveichik

"Lessons from the Ketubah of Haym Solomon,

A Jewish New Yorker & Financier of the American Revolution"

Friday Night, March 3 | Services at 5:30 pm | Dinner at 7:00 pm

Register at shearithisrael.org/yp-march-dinner.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

We welcome the following new members to our growing Shearith Israel family:

Raymond Jasen

Sandra Rose

Mazal tob to **Judy & Joel Schreiber**, upon the birth of a great grandson, born to their grandchildren, Blima and Ben Weintraub.

We mourn the loss of our member, **Dr. Alan Lubarr**.

Condolences to his wife, **Jane Shiff**.

Presidents Day Weekend Schedule Changes

- Our office will be **closed** on Monday, February 20, for the legal holiday.
 - Monday morning services will be held at **8:05 am**.
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COMING UP

Motzei Shabbat Parent-Child Learning

Next Session:

Saturday Night, February 25 | 7:00 pm

Led by Dr. Pasha Kletenik, Head of School, MDS

"Learning From the Heroes of the Purim Story"

Featuring make-your-own ice cream sundaes and Insomnia Cookies!

Register at shearithisrael.org/pcl.

PURIM AT SHEARITH ISRAEL

Monday night, March 6-Tuesday, March 7

Purim Night Services, followed by Megillah: 5:55 pm

For CSI Youth: Myron the Magnificent's Purim Magic Show: 5:45 pm

Late Reading of Megillah: 8:00 pm

Purim Morning Reading of the Megillah: 8:00 am

Women's Megillah Reading in Small Sanctuary: 8:00 am

Sisterhood Mishloah Manot

DEADLINE EXTENDED to 11 pm THIS Monday, February 20

Once again the Sisterhood is offering members an opportunity to send Mishloah Manot to other members of our congregation. Your friends can receive either a card or a package of Purim treats (their choice of which they want) for pickup at the synagogue, letting them know you included them on your list.

To select recipients, visit shearithisrael.org/sisterhoodmanot.

For CSI Youth:

Myron the Magnificent's Purim Magic Show

During Megillah Reading | Doors open 5:45 pm | Show starts at 6:00 pm

*Registration encouraged, sponsorship opportunities available at
shearithisrael.org/purim-magic.*

Matanot L'Ebyonim

Donate at shearithisrael.org/matanot-lebyonim.
