

DEBAR TORAH by RABBI ROHDE



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL
The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Shabbat Ahare Mot-Kedoshim

April 28-29, 2023 | 8 Iyar 5783

SCHEDULE

Kaplan: p. 584 | Haftarah: p. 1168

Hertz: p. 480 | Haftarah: p. 510

Candle Lighting | 7:31 pm

Friday Evening Services | 7:00 pm | Main Sanctuary

Zemirot | 8:15 am

Shahrit | 9:00 am | Main Sanctuary

Youth Groups/Tot Shabbat | Meet at 10:00 am | Fidanque Youth Room

Jr. Congregation | 10:30 am | Small Synagogue | Led this week by Rev. Z.

Edinger and Ari Sherizen & our Teen Leaders

Kiddush | following services | *Sponsored by Lori Jacobowitz and Faith*

Fogelman, in memory of their grandparents, Abraham & Helen Jacobowitz

Shabbat Afternoon Class | 6:45 pm | Rabbi Soloveichik

Evening Services | 7:30 pm | Main Sanctuary

Habdala | 8:29 pm

Weekday Service Times

Mornings:

Sunday: 8:05 am

Monday-Friday: 7:05 am

Evenings:

Sunday-Thursday: 6:30 pm

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

Although up until Chapter 19 Leviticus deals with mostly ritual matters such as sacrifices and laws of purity and impurity, at Chapter 19 there is an attempt to include all sorts of civil and other types of law under the umbrella of the Priestly purview. The beginning of Chapter 19 introduces this integration of all these areas of law, including all of the preceding and following categories of law, under the banner summation that “You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am Holy.” Modern Biblical scholars therefore refer to much of Leviticus as the “Holiness Code.” All of Biblical Law is seen as steps to maintain a pure and unadulterated loyalty and fidelity to the God of Israel, to the Nation of Israel, and to Israel’s traditional way of life. One possible definition of this term “kadosh” or “holy” could thus be something like “unsullied devotion or dedication.”

But the term “Holy” also conveys universally-understood aspects far beyond a particularistic dedication and loyalty. Nachmanides in his commentary explains this general summation of all of the Torah’s law as meaning “be disciplined” or “be self-restraining.” Against Rashi’s commentary, which understands self-restraint as meaning restraining oneself from particular sins or types of sins, Nachmanides understands this commandment as an imperative to be disciplined and self-restrained in general. Nachmanides points out that Talmudic and Aggadic sources understand this and similar texts in this manner. I often point out that Josephus portrays the Jews as being like Spartans and Stoics in their discipline and self-restraint (as well as in their strength!), and Philo also presents the Torah’s Law as a model of Hellenistic self-discipline. Hellenistic thought saw disciplined self-governance as parallel to disciplined societal governance, with each reinforcing the other: Good societal governance led to a disciplined body politic, and a disciplined citizenry led to a good and strong state. Seeing Jewish Law as leading to disciplined self-governance for the individual and orderly and disciplined self-governance for the society and even for the society’s rulers was part of the appeal of Judaism to the ancient world. The Torah’s law was seen as a model of the teaching of self-restraint and discipline as an end unto itself. Nachmanides’ interpretation of this central maxim of the Torah in this way leads him to take one step further and declare that this goal is not met or fulfilled by merely following the letter of the Law: There is an imperative to exercise restraint and discipline even within areas which the letter of the Law leaves unrestricted and permits!

This view that part of the Torah’s raison d’être is to promote discipline and restraint of the self as well as the society as an end in and of itself is not particularly popular today, and I often find myself embattled when I espouse this view. Nachmanides does indeed go quite far in his castigation of the consumption of any food more than necessary and the imbibing of alcohol in any more than small amounts (sorry, Kiddush Club!). Our society’s view of discipline and order is that it must emerge and evolve out of the individual’s drive and desire to create and succeed and not be imposed and inculcated from outside.

However, I have always been encouraged by the more formalist approaches to self-discipline in the sports and music worlds with which I’m familiar: There has been a radical shift to appreciate the goal of extreme self-discipline and following just the right form in those realms which is continuing to have an impact. The Torah’s laws seen as a model of how to lead a well-disciplined and orderly life will continue to inspire those individuals and societies which truly seek to develop their talents and strengths.

2023 SPRING FUNDRAISER

You can still sign up! 5 lectures to go!

WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS: Seven Iconic Images in the History of Israel, and the Stories Behind Them

An Important 7-Part Virtual Series by Rabbi Meir Soloveichik

Session #3: THIS Tuesday, May 2

“Exodus: From a Ship to a Book to a Movie”

Sign-up levels from \$250 to \$18,000

All prior registrants will receive the Zoom link on Monday, and it will be in the confirmation email for new registrants when you sign up.

Special Offer for Series Underwriters (\$3,600 and up):

Don't worry about missing a livestream; a recording of the lectures will be made available to you.

*All sponsors will be recognized based on their **cumulative** giving in a beautiful content-rich commemorative booklet that will be mailed out after the series.*

Sign up at shearithisrael.org/giving/SpringFundraiser2023

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

In lieu of an annual appeal, **West Side Hatzolah** is having an online fundraising campaign as part of the *Global Chevra Hatzalah-Thon*.

While you are all familiar with the work Hatzolah does, during the past year, West Side Hatzolah has also invested over one million dollars in vehicle infrastructure, purchasing two brand new ambulances, and three new Emergency Response Vehicles (ERVs): two Chevy Tahoes and one Ford Explorer. WSH also increased our ambulance fleet from two full time ambulances to three full time ambulances to ensure that they continue to deliver the best emergency care to our community.

Hatzolah thanks you for your continued support and are grateful for any amount you can contribute at hatzalahthon.com/westside/sp.

COMING UP THIS WEEK

Girls' & Young Women Book of Ruth Reading on Shabu'ot

In-person only | Shabuot, Shabbat, May 27

Rehearsals: **THIS Sunday, April 30 at 9:30 am & May 14 at 10:00 am**

New readers are warmly invited to participate!

Any girls or young women (through college age) who are interested in participating should **contact Mrs. Lisa Rohde (lirohde-csi@yahoo.com)** as soon as possible for an assignment.

With the audio available on the Synagogue's website, learning a part is made very mobile and accessible.

BOOK EVENT:

One Hundred Saturdays:

Stella Levi and the Search for a Lost World

with author **Michael Frank** and Shearith Israel member, **Isabelle Levy**
THIS Thursday, May 4 | 7:00 pm (following 6:30 pm Evening Services)

Isabelle Levy and Michael Frank will have a lively conversation about the process of writing, researching, and above all learning how to listen to the story of Stella Levi, who is one of the last remaining survivors of the Sephardic Jewish community of Rhodes.

Register at shearithisrael.org/hundred-saturdays.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

5th Annual *Smash The Stigma* Event

Presented by Shearith Israel's Caring Connection

Held annually during Mental Health Awareness Month and co-sponsored by a consortium of neighborhood synagogues and Jewish institutions

Wednesday, May 31

Stay tuned for registration and details.

Minyan Happy Hour with Z. Edinger

Thursdays | Following Evening Services

Join us for “Happy Hour” every Thursday night following evening services - free for those who attend services. You'll be glad you came!