

## DEBAR TORAH by RABBI ROHDE

### Seek Perfection of Form by Copying God's Designs

*And they shall make me a sanctuary, so that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you regarding the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of its furnishings: Just so shall ye make it. (Ex. 25:8-9)*

There is a striking contrast between the legal sections of Exodus and the Building of the Tabernacle section which immediately follows. The sequence of the two sections is not fully explained by the desire of God and Israel to dwell close-by. After all, why can't God dwell among Israel without such a fancy, expensive Sanctuary? But what both sections have in common is an ideal order, a perfected form. Justice, law, and order in society must aim for the highest ideals. We cannot replace the lost eye or tooth of the injured, hence taking out the perpetrator's eye or tooth makes no sense. But one must have an ideal of perfection in the penalty to be paid, understanding that the penalty must somehow parabolically approach an equivalence. These ideals of law and order are now extended into building a structured and ordered Home for God. Ideal perfection of Law and Order must not only be pursued in societal governance: Such ideals must be sought in aesthetics, hygiene, and all other aspects of life as well. Throughout social, individual, and spiritual life, the perfection of the Teaching of Torah, the ideal Way of God, must be sought. We must seek in all things to imitate, as perfectly as possible, the Pattern of the Tabernacle directly shown to Moses by God.

The modern Hasidic thinker Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote "remember that you must build your life as if it were a work of art." But it is more than "self-expression" which Judaism enjoins, more than any "self-actualization" through artistic endeavor. The Torah asks us to strive for its ideals of perfection in that expression. We believe there is a Divine ideal of form which provides our most perfect expression and towards which we should strive. Of course, too much insistence upon strictly following form can be stultifying. But perfecting the ordered orchestration of our life is the goal of the Torah. God does not merely (or even mainly) "Create" the World: His main job is to "Form" and "Govern," to bring the Chaos of the Natural World into Perfect Order, and such is similarly the role of God's human imitators. God's Ideals are vouchsafed to us through the Word of the Torah, after which we are to pattern ourselves, in order to bring ourselves, our lives, and our societies into ideal order.

The strict and detailed ceremonial laws of sacrifices are criticized as the most preposterous part of Torah, and indeed we don't actually practice the rite. And yet, as I have written many times before, these laws remain extremely important as a Divine ideal of what a Home should be. Especially in an era like our own, when basic conceptions of how to make a home are under threat, the Torah teaches us that the basic conceptions of a Home is an Ideal in the Mind of God, revealed in His Law, the perfection of which man is to strive to imitate. An orderly, well-founded and built, aesthetic home, clean of impurity and with regular meal service, is an ideal to be imitated for the perfection of every family and society. The Torah's canonization of the building of the Tabernacle and its sacrificial rite teaches that the foundation of the ordinary human home reflects a Divine Habitation, a Habitation no less Divine and pervaded with God's Law than the Natural Law pervading God's Creation.

In my sports and art, I struggle with the issue of the importance of proper form and strictly following it. At times I've rebelled against coaches who were sticklers for following "perfect form," with form often becoming a kind of ideal. But I also know that their attention to form has developed strength exactly where I needed it and kept me free of injury. My lifestyle with constant going back and forth to the synagogue has meant leading a tightly-orchestrated life, but that too has resulted in steady development. The music I sing at the synagogue is also largely pre-set. The formalistic rote performance can, at times, be empty, inauthentic, and lack enthusiasm. Too much perfectionism can be the enemy of adequate success and can actually impede greatness. But works of art built upon idiosyncratic and unperfected designs will likely totter and not last. And even what lasts will often lack depth, ingenuity, and style due to lack of experience with various options. Rather, live your life based first upon copying models of God's ideal and perfect architectural designs. The Torah enjoins many such models of discipline upon us. But this is the way we develop and strengthen ourselves and find our voice and style.



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL  
The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

## Shabbat Terumah

February 16-17, 2024 | 8 Adar I, 5784

### SCHEDULE

Kaplan: p. 380 | Haftarah: p. 1120

Hertz: p. 325 | Haftarah: p. 336

**Candle Lighting** | 5:14 pm

**Evening Services** | 5:15 pm

**Friday Night Lights** | following services | Rabbi Soloveichik

**Zemirot** | 8:15 am | Main Sanctuary

**Shahrit** | 9:00 am | Main Sanctuary

**Year of Hope Lecture #4** | At Morning Services | Rabbi Soloveichik

**Tot Shabbat** | 10:00 am | Fidanque Youth Room

**Youth Groups** | 10:00 am | Elias Room

**Jr. Congregation** | 10:30 am | Little Synagogue

**Kiddush** | following services

**Shabbat Afternoon Class** | 4:25 pm | Rabbi Soloveichik | Main Sanctuary

**Teen Class** | 4:25 pm | Baruch-Lev Kelman | Elias Room

**Evening Services** | 5:10 pm

**Habdala** | 6:03 pm

*Our office will be **closed** on Monday for the legal holiday.*

### Weekday Service Times

Sunday & Monday Mornings: 8:05 am

Tuesday-Friday Mornings: 7:05 am

Sunday-Thursday Evenings (Arbit Only): 6:30 pm

## COMING UP

For details & registration, visit [shearithisrael.org](http://shearithisrael.org)

**Young Professionals Shabbat Dinner with the ZOA**  
featuring *Shearith Israel* members *Dov Zigler* and *Elijah Kochin*  
in conversation with ZOA member *Akiba Covitz*  
NEXT Friday night, February 23 | Ages 21-35

*Shabbat Adar Dinner*

**From Singapore to Savile Row to Bespoke in Brooklyn:**  
*A Hasidic London-Trained Tailor In Conversation With*  
*Rabbi Meir Soloveichik*

Friday Evening, March 8 | Following Evening Services & *Friday Night Lights*

**Women Unite To Show Love & Support to Am Yisrael**

Tuesday, February 27 | 7:30 pm | The Jewish Center, 131 W 86 St

*Donations will go directly to help pregnant women widowed by the war, young couples married during the war, and children orphaned by the war*

Lyaliza Soloveichik is on the event committee for this important evening of solidarity and hope. Bring baby items and hear words of inspiration from Lori Palatnik, Founding Director of Momentum: "Rebuilding Together: The Opportunity of Our Historic Times."

## PURIM AT SHEARITH ISRAEL

### Sisterhood Mishloah Manot

This year's packages will be filled with Israeli products. Support the Israeli economy while sending Mishloah Manot to your fellow congregants!

*Check your email for information on how to participate.*

### CSI WOMEN & GIRLS – READERS WELCOME!

#### Women's Megillah Reading

Megillah Reading on Purim morning, Sunday, March 24 | 8:30 am

*Rehearsals: Sundays, Feb 25 & Mar 10 | 7 pm*

Women and girls over the age of 12 are welcome to contact Mrs Lisa Rohde at [lirohde-csi@yahoo.com](mailto:lirohde-csi@yahoo.com) to participate.

#### Teen Girls & Young Women's Shir HaShirim Reading

Shabbat, Hol HaMoed Pesah, April 27

The young women (post-Bat Mitzvah through 20s) of our congregation recite the Song of Songs on Pesah. Preparation and training provided. Newcomers welcome! For information and to participate, please contact [lirohde-csi@yahoo.com](mailto:lirohde-csi@yahoo.com).

## 2024 YEAR OF HOPE

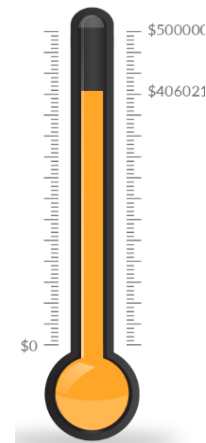
### Rabbi Soloveichik's *Year of Hope* Lecture Series

"Judaica and Us: The Story of the Jewish People in Ten Objects"

Lecture #4: THIS Shabbat, February 17 | At Morning Services

Time Travel and Us:

The Most Incredible Calendars in Jewish History



(as of 2/14)

### Capital Campaign

**Replacing our Sanctuary Carpet & Other Vital Repairs**

Our Sanctuary is a prayer space of profound beauty, dignity, and serenity that has stood the test of time. While to the casual eye, the majesty of the space endures, there's an undeniable truth beneath our feet—our carpet is torn and tattered, bearing witness to the countless footsteps of generations within these walls.

Among other infrastructure repairs, it's time to replace the carpet, in both the men's and women's sections, so that our sacred space reflects the reverence it deserves.

**We're almost there!** If everyone pitches in, we can reach our \$500,000 goal by March 31.

Donate at [shearithisrael.org/giving/year-of-hope](http://shearithisrael.org/giving/year-of-hope).

## COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Welcome new members **Jenny & Gilles Wallier** to our growing Shearith Israel family.

Congratulations to **Anwar Suleiman** upon the staging of his play, *Cafe Munich*, directed by **Barbara Schofield Suleiman**. Tickets are available on [eventbrite.com](http://eventbrite.com) for the final performance this Sunday, February 18.