

## DEBAR TORAH by RABBI ROHDE

### Wait Upon the Divine Cloud's Descent

The instructions to Aaron at the beginning of this section say that Aaron is not to come just at any time he chooses to the Sanctuary, but rather he must always follow a precise, proper decorum – that is, if Aaron and his living descendants are not to die as did his oldest sons Nadab and Abihu. There are many enigmas in these passages, but one particularly enigmatic statement made here is the detail that “for in the Cloud I shall manifest upon the [Ark’s] Cover.” The mention of this detail here seems offered as kind of an explanation of some of the other instructions, even though, of course, we already knew before in general that God manifested His Presence (at least by daytime) in the form of a Cloud which descended upon the Tabernacle.

The import of the mention of the Cloud as an explanation here would seem to be in a sense similar to the rules of decorum Queen Esther had to follow in meeting King Ahasuerus: On pain of death, it was only King Ahasuerus who could officially initiate the encounter. Similarly, Aaron cannot initiate the encounter, but must wait for the Cloud to manifest God’s Presence and availability to receive Aaron, and only then, like Esther, if Aaron follows strict rules of protocol, dress and noble etiquette. Although the Sanctuary is where Man and God meet, only God can initiate, at least officially, although Man can and must prepare himself (like Esther) with propitiatory gifts for such a Meeting, should it please God to favor Man with such Occasion. Speculation might seem to suggest that in offering God “Strange fire” and uncommanded incense, Nadab and Abihu had attempted to initiate interaction with God by “conjuring up” some kind of “cloud” of divine presence, rather than waiting for God to initiate the “Cloud” of Divine Manifestation. This possible implication is left entirely unsaid. However, what is clear is that Aaron and his successors may not come to encounter God at any time they will, but only following the rules for Meetings and Encounters set by God. The simple clothes mentioned here for Aaron (unlike those mentioned elsewhere, for example) are humble as well as modest, and emphasize Aaron’s humility, modesty, and submission before the Lord, rather than enticing God’s Favor through more beautiful clothing.

Further on, these proper timings and procedures for offering sacrifices are contrasted with idolatrous practices of sacrificing animals, seemingly at any time anyone wanted, to any particular demon or god they wanted. I find the term (שַׁעִירִים) (se’irim) used here for demons, as well as the same term used (perhaps intentionally), by contrast, to the he-goats offered in the recommended offerings to God, quite striking, at least in my imagination: This term for he-goat, as well as what seem to be billy-goat-like demons, always resonated in my linguistic and musical ear with the Greek term “satyr.” (Or maybe it just resonates with my love of ancient farm animals and their lesser-known linguistic designations, like billy- and nanny-goats, ewes & rams, mutton, etc. And, needless to say, every time I come to a bridge I always paraphrase “Three Billy Goats Gruff,” calling out “Troll Bridge – Gotta Pay the Troll!”) Anyway, satyrs (but not trolls, unless they troll particular types of sites) and similarly-horned billy-goats do imply, shall we say, particular types of initiatory proclivities, (which proper Queens like Esther were banned from directly initiating, and in the Song of Songs, the noble Daughters of Jerusalem are also forsworn from directly initiating).

But metaphor aside, the implication is clear: In Divine Service, do not be headstrong! While in many aspects of life it can be important to seize the initiative like Joshua, Caleb, or Pinehas, in the Sanctuary the Priests are to play a more passive role. Their role is to be servants, and like servants they are to wait upon their masters, to be waiters (like my son at Talia’s Steakhouse over Pesah). Perhaps they can coax somewhat with inducements, and they should be prepared with gifts and tributes to curry Divine Favor. But they must for the most part patiently await the Divine Spirit to descend and summon them first, coming readily when summoned, taking especial care to humbly follow the Divine Orders and decorum. Like a good wife, we are here taught how to patiently wait upon the Favor of the Divine Spirit.



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL  
The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

## Shabbat Ahare-Mot

May 3-4, 2024 | 26 Nisan, 5784

### SHABBAT SCHEDULE

Kaplan: p. 584 | Haftarah: p. 1164 // Hertz: p. 480 | Haftarah: p. 494

**Candle Lighting** | 7:37 pm

**Evening Services** | 7:00 pm

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

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

**Shabbat Morning Talk** | 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** | 6:50 pm | Rabbi Soloveichik | Main Sanctuary

**Teen Shiur** | 6:50 pm | Baruch-Lev Kelman | Elias Room

**Evening Services** | 7:35 pm

**Habdala** | 8:36 pm

*Rosh Hodesh Iyyar begins on Tuesday night.*

### Weekday Service Times

Sunday Morning: 8:05 am

Monday-Friday Mornings: 7:05 am

Sunday-Thursday Evenings (Minha & Arbit): 6:30 pm

**ANNUAL SPRING FUNDRAISER  
VIRTUAL LECTURE SERIES**

**PREMIERES THIS WEDNESDAY**

**"A History of Judaism in Five Foods"**

*A Virtual Lecture Series by Rabbi Meir Soloveichik*

**May 8-June 4**

*Sign up and sponsor at [shearithisrael.org/spring-fundraiser2024](http://shearithisrael.org/spring-fundraiser2024)*



**Register & Sponsor now to access  
the livestreams on Zoom at 7:30 pm!**

**Virtual Lecture Schedule:**

Wednesday, May 8	Holy Hallah to Holey Bagels: The Striking, Shocking, Amusing, and Inspiring 4,000 Year Story of Jewish Bread
Tuesday, May 14	Hamin, Cholent, Adafina: The Stirring Story of Sabbath Stew
Tuesday, May 21	Boureka, Latkeh, Knish: How the Humble Potato Changed Jewish Life Forever
Tuesday, May 28	Arbes to Hummus: A Little Legume, Jewish History, and the Future of Israeli Cuisine
Tuesday, June 4	A Talmudic Fisherman, Chagall's Herring, and Rabbinic Sushi: The Jewish Affection for Fish from Egypt to Today

*All sponsors and underwriters will be recognized in a beautiful content-rich commemorative booklet.*

**\*For Series Underwriters Only:** You will be invited to attend **live culinary "edutainment" experiences with Rabbi Soloveichik**. And don't worry about missing a livestream; **a recording of the series** will be made available to you at the conclusion. Stay tuned for more details!

**COMING UP**

*Registration & additional details at [shearithisrael.org](http://shearithisrael.org)*

**THIS Tuesday:** Stitch & Fix Returns! | 1-3 pm | Elias Room | RSVP to [rgedinger@gmail.com](mailto:rgedinger@gmail.com)  
**THIS Wednesday:** Free Public Monthly Tour with Z. Edinger | before 6:30 pm services

**Yom HaShoah Annual UWS Reading of the Names**

**THIS Sunday, May 5 | 10:00 pm-7:00 pm | Bnai Jeshurun**

**THIS Monday, May 6 | 9:00 am-5:00 pm | Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan**

*Join Rabbi Robde for the Shearith Israel slot at 4:00-4:30 am*

**An Evening with Lahav Deri, October 7 Survivor**

**THIS Monday, May 6 | 7:00 pm | For All Ages**

*Hosted by the Shearith Israel Young Professional Leadership Committee*

**Inaugurating Israel:**

**A Pre-Yom HaZikaron/Yom HaAtzmaut Celebration**

**Baruch-Lev Kelman, Rabbinic Intern**

**THIS Thursday, May 9 | 7:00 pm | following 6:30 pm Evening Services**

**Upper West Side Yom HaZikaron/Yom HaAtzmaut Event**

**May 13 | 7:00 pm Services & Commemoration | 8:00 pm Celebration**

**Hosted this year at The Jewish Center, 131 W. 86th Street**

**Registration required; free but sponsorships are appreciated!**

*RSVP at [jewishcenter.org](http://jewishcenter.org).*

**COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Mazal tob to **Susan & Scott Shay** upon the marriage of their son, Benjamin, to Alyssa Kutner of Denver, Colorado.

**Rachel & Dr. David Vorchheimer** are pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter, Hannah, to Meshulam Ungar of Silver Spring, Maryland.

We mourn the loss of our longtime member, **Sam H. Cohen**. Condolences to Angela Salas, Sam's constant companion and caretaker for many years.

**Year of Hope Carpet Campaign Progress Report**

We are delighted with the results of our Year of Hope Capital Campaign and thank everyone who contributed to the success of the campaign. We would also like to share the status of the carpet restoration project. For our full progress report, see our Thursday newsletter.