

DEBAR TORAH by RABBI ROHDE

Marching: Group Solidarity to Keep Us All In-Step

Last year, in my exposition of this Parasha, I asked why the Torah sees its ideal portrayal of the way the Israelites moved about from place to place as a march in precise military formation. My conclusion was that “when all of us move together in groups in lock-step, each man can feel confident that his fellow has his back.” Such discipline to be able to move the entire people around in precise military formation is thereby presented as the ideal goal of the Book of Numbers, the Fourth Book of the Torah, and is central to the coloring Numbers gives its interpretation of the goal of the giving of the Law. And conversely, one can say, Numbers sees the lack of such precise military-drill-like cohesion among Israel as the root of all sin, problems, and evil among Israel. In 1:44,

Numbers describes all of the tribes of Israel as if each tribe acted as one man, as if all of Israel consisted of only twelve men. The haftarah goes even further, saying that Judah and Israel will be redeemed when they appoint one head over them all. The opposite of formation marches in lock-step, disunity, is what unravels Israel in Numbers’ narrative of the subsequent desert rebellions. Thus the “boring” census descriptions and idealized depictions of marching formations are central to the ethos of the Book of Numbers, for they form a background premise against which Israel’s failures to march in lock-step are to be measured. As Josephus wrote, the Jews are supposed to be comparable to the Spartans in their possession of military discipline.

True, there is not one head of the people in Numbers, but rather twelve tribal heads, each with its own banner, and clans under them which functioned as ranks and platoons. The tribal system gave a bit more say in governance to the people, serving as a bulwark against potential monarchic tyranny. Of course, tribal power also could be divisive, and many rebellions and dissensions in Numbers started out as fractures along tribal fault-lines. And the fact that the ranks were arranged by subsidiary clans elevated the status of each. The higher authorities couldn’t just “order” clans around the way they could in an army of slaves and mercenaries; they had to respect the pride and rank of each unit. The ideal Israel portrayed in the military formations of Numbers is no general-dominated tyranny, but rather an army of noble freemen whose rights and privileges had to be respected. And yet, ideally, out of their own discipline, respect for God and Law, and their sense of group cohesion, they are able to move in precise formation, in lock-step.

Such voluntary group cohesion, even without a tyrant forcing them, and even without the pressure of having to respond to an enemy, is the true goal of the Torah. But if Israel fails to reach such an ideal level of cohesion and discipline voluntarily through obedience to Torah, the repercussions will be severe. Either we subject ourselves voluntarily to the most severe military-style discipline and drill, banishing every divisiveness in our midst to march precisely in-step as one, or we will suffer the consequences. The evil chastisement we will face from external sources will be but a reflection of our own failures to hold to discipline and keep rank.



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL
The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Shabbat Bemidbar

June 7-8, 2024 | 2 Sivan, 5784

SHABBAT SCHEDULE

Kaplan: p. 654 | Haftarah: p. 1182 // Hertz: p. 568 | Haftarah: p. 948

Candle Lighting | 8:07 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 | *Sponsored in anticipation of Hudson Lentnek becoming a Bat Mitzvah by her loving family, Ian, Raquel, & Dakota Lentnek*
| *Kiddush Contributor: Laury Frieber, in honor of Aviva Miller and the cadets & midshipmen of the American Service Academies Program*

Shabbat Afternoon Class | 7:20 pm | Rabbi Soloveichik | Main Sanctuary

Teen Shiur with Baruch-Lev Kelman will not meet this week.

Evening Services | 8:05 pm

Habdala | 9:07 pm

Shabuot begins on Tuesday night.

Weekday Service Times

Sunday Morning: 8:05 am / Monday-Friday Mornings: 7:05 am

Sunday-Thursday Evenings (Minha & Arbit): **6:45 pm**

See inside for Shabuot schedule.

SHABUOT 5784

THIS Tuesday evening, June 11-Thursday, June 13

Rabbi Soloveichik's Shabuot Lecture

Night of Shabuot I, Tuesday, June 11 | 11:30 pm

Benjamin Disraeli, Mount Sinai, and Anti-Semitism:

A Talmudic and Historical Reflection on Our Current Moment

Come for the Torah, stay for the cheesecake!

Be A Girls' Book of Ruth Reader

Rehearsal: THIS Sunday, June 9 | 10 am | Main Sanctuary

Reading on Wednesday, Shabuot I, June 12

Interested? Contact Mrs. Lisa Robde at lrohde-csi@yahoo.com to sign up.

Shabuot Schedule

Ereb Shabuot – Tuesday Evening, June 11

Candle Lighting | 8:09 pm

Evening Services | 8:00 pm

Rabbi Soloveichik's Shabuot Lecture | 11:30 pm

Shabuot I – Wednesday, June 12

Consecration Anniversary, Crosby St Synagogue (1834)

Zemirot | 8:15 am

Shahrit & Hallel | 9:00 am

Torah Readings | 9:50 am

Girls' Book of Ruth Reading | 11:20 am

Kiddush | following services

Young Families "Shabuot on the Slopes of Sinai" Luncheon | *for registered families* | following services

Azharot Reading: Intro & 1st Part | 7:30 pm

Minha/Arbit Services | 8:00 pm

Day 2 Candle Lighting | after 8:55 pm

Shabuot II – Thursday, June 13

Zemirot | 8:15 am

Shahrit | 9:00 am

Kiddush | following services

Azharot Reading: 2nd Part | 7:30 pm

Minha/Arbit Services | 8:15 pm

Habdala: 8:56 pm

COMING UP

Registration & additional details at shearithisrael.org

Share your news:

Graduation Kiddush & Scroll of Honor

Shabbat, June 22 | Following Services

Featuring our annual ice cream cake tradition!

To submit your graduate's info or sponsor kiddush, visit

shearithisrael.org/graduation2024

The Sisterhood presents

Stitch & Fix

Next session: Tuesday, June 18 | 1-3 pm | Elias Room

RSVP to rgedinger@gmail.com

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mazal tob to **Hudson Lentnek**, who will be celebrating and delivering a speech in anticipation of becoming a Bat Mitzvah. Congratulations as well to the **Lentnek family**, who are sponsoring this week's *kiddush* in Hudson's honor.

Condolences to **Baruch-Lev Kelman**, upon the passing of his grandmother, Matilda Koen-Sarano.

Of Interest to the Community

- Shearith Israel is pleased to be the host venue of the World Zionist Organization's 2024 **International Bible Contest** for Adults (**Hidon Tanakh**) on Sunday, June 23, at 4 pm. Following the contest, all guests are invited to a complimentary dinner. Register at tinyurl.com/hidon-guests.
- West Side Hatzoloh is having its annual online fundraising campaign as part of the **Global Chevra HatzalahThon**. West Side Hatzoloh provides essential services to our community. Their volunteers are always on the front lines that heed the call 24/7 for us, our families and our community. **Please let Hatzoloh know that the Shearith Israel community cares!** Please donate at: hatzalahthon.com/westside/sp.