

### A Lesson in Discipline with the Direst Consequences

Parashat Ki-Tabo begins with the commandment to make a declaration of gratitude for being given the Promised Land along with an offering of the Land's First Fruits. God then reiterates Israel's being bound to follow God's Laws "with all your heart and with all your soul." In return for this, God has "affirmed this day that you shall be His treasured People, as He had spoken to you, to observe all His commandments and to set you high, in fame, renown and glory, above all the nations He made, to be a consecrated Nation to the Lord your God, as He has spoken (Deut. 26:18-19)." This is followed by a commandment that when they cross the Jordan they should take large stones, plaster them and inscribe God's law, which they should set up at Mount Ebal, along with some kind of altar. The narrative continues with a commandment to recite blessings (on Mount Gerizim) and curses (on the neighboring Mt. Ebal). Our text then lists a series of one-line curses which the Levites were to loudly proclaim to every man of Israel, followed in 28:1-14 by a series of blessings. Afterwards follows a lengthier set of curses, and the Parasha concludes with "the Words of the Covenant" Moses made with Israel in Transjordan which, if observed faithfully, will allow Israel to succeed in all they undertake.

The two sets of curses are distinct: The first short set simply states a particular law which the individual has violated, such as "cursed be the man who makes a sculptured image," or "cursed be he who moves his fellow's landmark." The blessings and curses which follow later list general rewards and punishments. Obviously, the punishment curses are a lot lengthier than the blessings, and the severity of the punishments gets to be quite graphic. Platonistic-Stoic thinker that I am, I often point out the severity of our Torah's discipline here. (Indeed, as some of my students have learned, this was the first Torah portion I taught to a bar-mitzvah boy, and its graphic descriptions of punishments I find most memorable). Indeed, our Torah's call to a severe discipline, quite aside from its theological moorings, is unlike anything I know of which has come down to us from ancient Greece or the West. And similar doomsday prognostications are repeated and amplified in our Prophets and lamentation literature.

I've often felt that the ancient Greeks and Romans led a rather geographically "sheltered" existence compared to the Middle East, and that has shaped much of the West. Greece and Italy, with their peninsulas and islands, their many mountains, their separated continent, and their later civilization, were simply not as subject to the ravages of siege-warfare which much of the Middle East knew so much more. In some sense it was similar to the later isolation of England and America from Europe. It could be asked: How was Moses in the Torah able to predict that the destruction of Jerusalem hundreds of years later would involve such dire scenes as he sets forth here in Deuteronomy? And my answer is that such devastation must have been frequent in a Middle East full of the ruins of fortified fortress cities which underwent and needed to withstand siege after siege. Capture of enemy fortresses, the looting of their spoils and the enslavement of whole nations was commonplace. It's just that the lamentations and stories and cries of anguish of most of those ancient Middle Eastern citadels have perished along with their memories, whereas the Jews' have survived. But part of the reason we survived was that we were the beneficiaries of the experience of those who didn't, and we recalled their anguish and devastation. In the Middle East, far more volatile than the West, only a stark recollection of the anguish and terror which comes to befall nations and cities which fail to enforce strict discipline and keep their covenants can keep a nation from perishing. Remember and be thankful for everything you have, for the moment you forget, the enemy at the gate awaits to pounce, and you shall be utterly lost. That dire warning, that heavy dose of sobering reality, based upon centuries of experience, is the Bible's legacy to the West.



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL  
The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

### Shabbat Ki Tabo

September 12-13, 2025 | 20 Elul, 5785

**Kaplan:** Parasha: 988 | Haftarah: 1240

**Hertz:** Parasha: 859 | Haftarah: 874

### SCHEDULE

**Candle Lighting** | 6:52 pm

**Evening Services** | 6:45 pm | Main Sanctuary

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

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

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

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

**Kiddush** | Paved Paradise

**Family Fun Seudah Shelishit & Astronomy Workshop** | 4:45 pm | *for youth and their parents* | Baruch-Lev Kelman

**Shabbat Afternoon Class** | 6:00 pm | Rabbi Meir Soloveichik

**Teen Shiur will not meet this week.**

**Evening Services (including *Selihot*\*)** | 6:45 pm

**Habdala** | 7:43 pm

### Weekday Service Times

#### Mornings:

Sunday: 8:05 am

Monday-Friday: 7:05 am

#### Evenings:

Monday-Thursday (Minha & Arbit): 6:30 pm

## HIGH HOLIDAYS

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### Your High Holiday Checklist

*Get it all done at [shearithisrael.org/high-holidays-5786](http://shearithisrael.org/high-holidays-5786)*

- Make your holiday offerings
- Sponsor Rabbi Soloveichik's Shabbat Teshuba Derasha
- Order your lulab & etrog set through the synagogue

*If you have reserved seats for the High Holidays, tickets will be going out the week of September 15.*

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### Elul Learning Series | “Gates of Repentance: Yona of Girona”

**with Baruch-Lev Kelman | Tues after Evening Services | Sept 16**

This High Holiday season, join Baruch-Lev in a study of Yona of Girona's holiday classic *Gates of Repentance*. The preeminent sage of medieval Catalonia, Yona's strenuous and tumultuous career informed his view of struggle, forgiveness and the human condition.

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### Shabbat Teshuba Derasha

**Rabbi Meir Soloveichik**

**Shabbat, September 27 | Following Morning Services**

**"Light and Darkness in Art and Life:**

**A Tale of Chiaroscuro, Kippur, and our Current Moment"**

***Sponsor at [shearithisrael.org](http://shearithisrael.org)***

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### Is Your Child (Mature Teen or Young Adult) Interested In Being A Paid High Holiday Youth Leader?

We welcome teens and young adults from our community to take on active leadership roles, including leading Youth Groups on the upcoming High Holidays. If your high schooler or college student is interested, reach out to Bonnie Barest at [bbarest@shearithisrael.org](mailto:bbarest@shearithisrael.org).

*These are paid positions; payment is commensurate with age and experience.*

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## THIS SHABBAT

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### Family Fun Welcome Back Seudah Shelishit

***Jewish Astronomy Workshop***

**Led by Baruch-Lev Kelman for youth and their parents**

**THIS Shabbat, Sept 13 | 4:45 pm**

**(followed by 6:45 pm Evening Services)**

Join Baruch-Lev for an afternoon of family learning and astronomical games!

## COMING UP

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### Bedek haBayit Day

**Sunday, September 21 | 9:45 am-12:45 pm | with Rev. Z. Edinger**

Join us for a special hands-on volunteer opportunity to help care for our Synagogue in advance of the High Holidays. Together, we'll polish ritual silver, reattach bells to Rimmonim, sort and inspect *talitot* for repair, mend *Humashim* and prayerbooks, and inventory textiles.

No experience needed – just bring your enthusiasm and a willingness to help.

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### Sisterhood Succah Decoration

**Sunday October 5 | 9 am-12 pm, 12 pm-3 pm, 3 pm-6 pm, 6 pm-9 pm**

**Monday, October 6 | 8 am-12 pm**

As always, our beautiful succah in our Elias Room will be decorated lavishly and lovingly by the Shearith Israel Sisterhood. Teens and adults, women and men, are invited to help decorate in preparation for the Succot Festival.

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### Outdoor Succah Decorating for Youth

**Sunday Afternoon, October 5 | 12:30-2:30 pm**

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### Lulab Wrapping Workshop | Red Strings & Gilded Baskets

**Led by Baruch-Lev Kelman & Rev. Z. Edinger**

**Sunday, October 5 | 7:00 pm, after Evening Services**

Join Baruch-Lev and Z for a workshop of traditional lulab assembly for all ages. Featuring the customs of various Jewish communities from ancient Rome to modern Yemen.

Decorate your lulab with scarlet threads in the traditional Portuguese manner.

*Registration coming soon.*

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### Stitch & Fix

**Now meets weekly on Tuesdays | 1:00-4:00 pm | Fidanque Room**

*RSVP to Rose at [rgedinger@gmail.com](mailto:rgedinger@gmail.com).*

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## OF INTEREST TO OUR COMMUNITY

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### Reimagining Ladino Song: Lily Henley Live in Concert

**Thursday, September 18 | 7:00 pm | 14th Street Y, 344 E 14th Street**

Join award-winning singer-composer Lily Henley and multi-instrumentalist Duncan Wickel as they reimagine Ladino music, blending its lyrics with the rich textures of Celtic and Americana folk.