

DEBAR TORAH by RABBI ROHDE

Killing Judiciously, with Judgment, the Opposite of Violence

The beginning paragraph of Gen. Chapter 9 starts and ends with a command for Noah and his children to be fruitful, multiply, and increase so their population should fill the earth. Of course, in filling the whole earth, man is somewhat in competition with the other creatures of God's Creation. That's what seems to lead to Verse 2's statement that all beasts of the earth and birds of the sky are to have fear of man, and that all creatures of the land, air, and sea have been given over to mankind's power and domination. That domination specifically includes Man's right to take the life of any living animal for Man's consumption. The only caveat, it seems, is that Man may not eat an animal "with its lifeblood in it." In return for this condition, there follows a pledge of God to "require [reckoning] for the 'lifeblood of Man' from any beast, as well as from any other Man." The poetry of this passage as a kind of poetic tit-for-tat, a "poetic justice," is easily discernable from the repeating rhythmic words, but what logical connection there is between the caveat and the following Divine pledge begs for excursus:

What readily comes to mind is that most predators and even some scavengers will not hesitate to begin consuming prey while they are still alive. They will, indeed, bite and tear their prey to death. What makes Man so different in his having been given this Divine command, only consuming his prey after killing it first? (A precept still generally observed – indeed, most of mankind find the consumption of a living creature rather reprehensible and disgusting or animal-like). The key seems to be that Man is to act like a proper Judge. Man is called upon to use proper "judgment" in seeking to consume an animal and to wait for that "judgment" to be meted out. The animal must be properly judged as condemned to death, and then executed. In His Law to Noah's descendants, God seeks to banish the human violence which brought about the Flood. The opposite of 'violence' is to kill only 'judiciously,' with the exercise of proper 'judgment.'

This application of "judgment" or what we might call "reasonableness" or "sense," even when we are not talking about a courtroom per se, is what distinguished man from beast. Man is called upon to exercise that capacity for judgment, to know right from wrong, which he acquired in the Garden. The display of judgment which Man is called upon to make is quite subtle in this particular law: Man is not at all called upon cease killing animals, nor is Man even called upon here to cease killing his fellow human, when he judges it appropriate. But Man is called upon to exercise his dominion judiciously and reasonably. The animal must be judiciously condemned and executed before Man may partake and eat, not violently attacked and consumed all at once, as other animals may do. This is the Image of God's Judgeship ("Elohim") in which Man was made. And should any man or beast attack a man violently, without such judgment, "in cold blood" (or rather, we should say "in hot-blooded pursuit," like an animal which consumes its prey alive), God will demand a just reckoning and requite: For this requiring the spilling of Man's blood without exercising proper judgment, God has empowered Man to exercise judgment in God's place and take God's revenge.

It bears emphasis again that God absolutely empowers Man to kill, take power, to dominate the Earth, to exert rulership, even harshly, and consume according to his needs. What Man must reject is "violence," meaning that Man must exert his judgment first. And exerting proper judgment does not necessarily involve a formal courtroom at all: All it may mean is this subtle distinction, this "test of reasonableness," showing that proper procedures have been followed. One must wait for some executioner to kill or slaughter the animal first. The entire difference between violence and justice rests upon this subtle distinction between wanton attack and displaying judgment first.



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL
The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Shabbat Noah

October 24-25, 2025 | 3 Marheshvan, 5786

SCHEDULE

Kaplan: Parasha: 27 | Haftarah: 1054

Hertz: Parasha: 26 | Haftarah: 41

Candle Lighting | 5:44 pm

Evening Services | 5:45 pm | Main Sanctuary

Friday Night Lights | Rabbi Meir Soloveichik | Following services | 5786

Season sponsored by the Julis-Romo-Rabinowitz family

Zemirot | 8:15 am | Main Sanctuary

Shahrit | 9:00 am | Main Sanctuary

Rabbi Soloveichik's Semiquincentennial Lecture | After Morning Services

Tot Shabbat | 10:00 am | Fidanque Youth Room

Jr. Congregation | 10:30 am | Little Synagogue

Kiddush | following services

Shabbat Afternoon Class | 4:55 pm | Rabbi Meir Soloveichik

Teen Shiur | 4:55 pm | Baruch-Lev Kelman

Evening Services | 5:40 pm

Habdala | 6:31 pm

Weekday Service Times

Mornings:

Sunday: 8:05 am

Monday-Friday: 7:05 am

Evenings:

Sunday-Thursday (Minha & Arbit): **5:45 pm**

IN CELEBRATION OF THE US SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL

And 250 Years of Jewish Life in the United States



Rabbi Soloveichik's Major Lecture Series

**First Installment: THIS Shabbat,
October 25, Shabbat Noah
After Morning Services**

The True National Treasure:
A Jew's Declaration of Independence
Comes Home

A Special Weekend in Newport: November 7-9, 2025

America at 250 and the Future of the Jewish People:

*Reflections on a Weekend on which we Commemorate Kristallnacht,
Mark Veterans Day, and Ponder the Future*

Touro Synagogue, 72 Touro Street, Newport, RI

If any of our congregants are visiting Newport on this special Shabbat, we'd be delighted to have you join us to experience four powerful talks by Rabbi Meir Soloveichik, one uplifting concert by Magevet, and an abundance of unity and togetherness.

Thinking of coming? Let us know at shearithisrael.org/newport-weekend250.

Veterans Day Program – “Beyond Chatham Square”

Thursday, November 6 | At Shearith Israel | Rev. Z. Edinger

7:00 pm (after 6:30 pm Evening Services)

Join **Rev. Z. Edinger** for a special Veterans Day program highlighting stories of Shearith Israel congregants who have served in America's armed forces—past and present. In connection with the upcoming **250th anniversary of our nation's founding**, this year's presentation looks beyond the patriots buried in Chatham Square—those we honor at our annual Memorial Day ceremony—to remember and recognize veterans interred throughout all our congregational cemeteries. We'll also pay tribute to **current members** of our congregation who continue the proud legacy of service begun nearly two and a half centuries ago.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mazal tob to **Henri Bengualid**, upon the birth of a great-granddaughter, Sylvie Beth, born to Elana & Jack Harary. Congratulations as well to proud grandparents Beth & Marc Bengualid and to the entire family.

CSI Synagogue Experience Survey

Members - The survey closes this Motzaei Shabbat, October 25. We want to hear from every single one of you!

GET OUT THE VOTE

A message from Shearith Israel's "Get Out the Vote" Captain, Naftali Friedman

Early voting starts THIS Saturday, October 25.

DEADLINE to request a mail-in ballot is also this Saturday.

This upcoming election is an opportunity for us to exercise our voices around the issues that affect us all: public safety, education, housing, and the fight against antisemitism. This is a pivotal moment for our city and our community. **We urge you to exercise your right and to encourage your friends, family, and networks to do the same.** Together, we can ensure Jewish community members show up, speak out, and are counted. **Not yet registered?** You can register at: <https://jewishvotersunite.org/regny>

Election Day is Tuesday, November 4. Your voice — and your vote — matter.

Find your Poll site: <https://findmypollsite.vote.nyc>

COMING UP

Register at shearithisrael.org

THIS SUNDAY

CSI Youth & The Sisterhood present

Bringing the Zoo (and Ark) to You!

Sunday, October 26 | 3-4:30 pm | Register at shearithisrael.org

Hear Parashat Noah on Shabbat and immerse yourself with the animals (yes, real live animals!) on Sunday afternoon!

Preparing With Wisdom, Planning With Love, Strength For The Journey

A Practical & Important Healthcare Workshop for Everyone

Sponsored by the Sisterhood and the Hebra | Presented by Ematai

Sunday, November 9 | 4:00 pm

The Sisterhood and the Hebra Hased Va'Amet are partnering with Ematai (ematai.org) for this workshop on the importance of completing a health care proxy and how to navigate meaningful conversations about aging and end-of-life care with our loved ones. This interactive workshop will run for 50-60 minutes and engage participants in discussion.

IN THE PRESS

"Marco Rubio in the City of David" – Read it at shearithisrael.org/press

Rabbi Soloveichik, in his November 2025 *Commentary* article, reviews Secretary of State Marco Rubio's recent speech in Jerusalem. The speech and his visit offered an important "reminder of who the 'indigenous people' of Zion really are, demonstrating as it does continuity between their presence there at least 3,000 years ago and the presence of 7 million Jews in the Jewish state today."