

# DEBAR TORAH by RABBI ROHDE

## Parched Grits

ואם-תקריב מנחת בפירות לה אביב קלוי באש גרש פרמל תקריב את מנחת בפירות:

If you bring a grain offering of first fruits to GOD, you shall bring new ears parched with fire, grits of the fresh grain, as your grain offering of first fruits.

ואין תקרב מנחת בפירות קדם ה מהקרב קלוי בנורא קמח קלוי ופירוקו תקרב נת מנחת בפירות:

ואם תקרב מנחת בפירות קדם ה אביב קלוי בנור פירוקו רכיבו תקריב נת מנחת בפירות:

(Lev 2:14 with Targum Jonathan & Targum Onkelos)

As part of my fascination with the history and re-creation of ancient Jewish foodstuffs, I have particularly been interested in what is called in Arabic “freekah” (sometimes spelled “freekeh”) which seems to be the equivalent of the foodstuff mentioned. “Freekah” is more and more available in America today, and of course it has had a long tradition in the cooking of the Arabs of Israel and Syria. We in the West are not used to this kind of use of grain, and Western fascination with Arab preparation of freekeh goes back at least (according to Wikipedia) the 1865 book *The Land of Israel: A Journal of Travels in Palestine*. British clergyman and scholar Henry Baker Tristram documented the preparation of freekeh near the Sea of Galilee:

“Many fires were lighted on the shingle by the shores of the lake... A few sheaves of wheat had been brought down from the fields above; these were tossed on the fire, and as soon as the straw was consumed, the charred heads were dexterously swept from the embers onto a cloak spread on the ground. The women of the party then beat the ears and tossed them into the air until they were thoroughly winnowed, when the wheat was eaten without further preparation ... the green ears had become half-charred by the roasting, and there was a pleasant mingling of milky wheat and a fresh crust flavour, as we chewed the parched corn. We were delighted to have seen the preparation, and to have partaken parched corn, so often mentioned in the Old Testament (“Freekeh” entry in Wikipedia).”

The Arabic term is sometimes explained as meaning “rubbed,” perhaps because the grains had to be “rubbed” to remove chaff or part of the burnt part which remained. But many explain that the term comes from the Syriac froka, the equivalent of the Aramaic perokhan or perochin which we have in the Targumim on our verse. There is a kind of ambiguity as to what this refers to, in the Hebrew, as well, which use several terms: “abhibh” “qalui” “geres,” & “karmel.” These terms are usually translated as “spring” (meaning green grain which is still moist), “roasted,” “grits,” and “new grain” (perhaps still “on the sheaf,” again meaning immature.” The most likely meaning of the Aramaic term, from what I gather, is “grits.” And that English term itself fascinated me when my parents moved to North Carolina and I first came across “hominy grits” in the cooking of the American South. I particularly found it fascinating that the term “grits” sounds so much like the Hebrew term we have in our verse which it apparently translates: “geres.” So what are grits?

Well, grits are the hard cracked-off pieces of a grain kernel. They are hard, like ground-up pebbles which have been made into tiny pieces, which are also called “grit,” which you can “grit your teeth on.” But these hard, coarse cracked-off pieces of whatever grain it is (in America maize, but in Europe wheat or barley or oats) can be roasted, or cooked in water, or both. With the common freekeh you get in the store today, you get roasted grits or roasted cracked green wheat, which you then cook in water. Why are all of these confusing terms in this verse?

Let me explain: Wheat and barley need quite a bit of processing to make them usable for human food. Even the mature, dried out kernels have to be tenderized somehow, and often that involves cracking or grinding either into coarse grits or into flour. From there the product can be combined with water and baked or cooked. Or else the whole or cracked kernels can be just roasted until, when partially burnt, you can chew the roasted kernels somewhat like you would chew not-fully-exploded popcorn kernels. Indeed, kosher-for-Passover chewy roasted kernels of wheat or barley, along with nuts, was at one time what you would give your children as a snack to keep them from getting too hungry during the Haggadah.

But immature spring barley or wheat even required more steps, if you wanted to use some of it early. First you had to roast it to dry it out. And it would have been harder to separate from the chaff and other parts of the stalk, so like the description from 1865, they likely just roasted all of it with the chaff together. The 1865 description doesn’t say they ground it into grits, but our modern freekeh is usually that way, and that’s what the Aramaic terms seem to mean, like the modern Hebrew term for “crumbled,” or “cracked into bits.” The roasting process doesn’t tenderize or burn it like you would for as snack, but it just “parches” it, and makes it easier to use like a mature grain, and it imparts a burnt-flavor to whatever is made from it. I have often wondered at this season about whether freekeh could be made kosher for Passover, but so far I haven’t seen any. Then again, you don’t even see the kosher-for-Passover roasted grain which they gave the kids at the Seder up until modern times. Oh well, a project I can dream about! My fellow athletes say I’ve got lots of grit...



# CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

## Shabbat Vayikra

March 20-21, 2026 | 3 Nisan, 5786

### SCHEDULE

**Hertz:** Parasha: 410 | Haftarah: 424

**Kaplan:** Parasha: 498 | Haftarah: 1142

**Candle Lighting** | 6:50 pm

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

**Friday Night Lights** | following services | Rabbi Soloveichik | *5786 Season sponsored by the Julis-Romo-Rabinowitz family*

**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** | following services | *Kiddush supporter & wine sponsor: The Roberts family, in memory of Maurice Albert Saleh*

**Shabbat Afternoon Class** | 6:05 pm | Rabbi Soloveichik

**Baruch-Lev Kelman is in Newport this week at the Sephardic Shabbaton for High Schoolers, so his Teen Shiur will resume next week.**

**Evening Services** | 6:50 pm

**Habdala** | 7:44 pm

*There is no choir this Shabbat.*

### Weekday Service Times

**Mornings:**

Sunday: 8:05 am

Monday-Friday: 7:05 am

**Evenings:**

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

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## PESAH PREVIEW

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### Bedek HaBayit Day

**THIS Sunday, March 22 | 10:30 am-12:00 pm**

Join us for a special hands-on volunteer opportunity to help care for our Synagogue in advance of the Spring holidays. Together, we'll polish ritual silver, reattach bells to Rimonim, sort and inspect talitot for repair, mend Humashim and prayerbooks, and inventory synagogue textiles. No experience needed – just bring your enthusiasm and a willingness to help.

For questions and to RSVP, contact Rev. Z. Edinger at [zedinger@shearithisrael.org](mailto:zedinger@shearithisrael.org).

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### Shabbat HaGadol Derasha

**Rabbi Meir Soloveichik**

**NEXT Shabbat Morning, March 28**

The Writing on the Wall:

Purim, Pesah, and the Pattern of Jewish History

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

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## READERS WELCOME: Women's Reading of Shir HaShirim

**Shabbat of Pesah, April 4**

Open to women and girls of all ages! If you're interested in learning parts, email Mrs. Lisa Rohde at [lrohde-csi@yahoo.com](mailto:lrohde-csi@yahoo.com). With the audio available on the Synagogue's website, learning a part is made very mobile and accessible.

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## KIDS KORNER

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### CSI Youth Matza-Making Factory

*With books from PJ Library!*

**Sunday, March 22 | 3:00 pm**

*Signup is open at [shearithisrael.org/matza-making](http://shearithisrael.org/matza-making).*

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## Experience Ancient Egypt – Hol HaMoed Trip to the Met

**Monday, April 6 | 11:00 am | Metropolitan Museum of Art**

*With Jake and Baruch-Lev*

Registration coming soon!

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## FAITH FOR FOOD + MAOT HITTIM

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### *Faith for Food* is Gearing Up for Pesah!

This year, in addition to collecting Maot Hittim to benefit members of our own *kehilla* (and beyond), **we are collecting funds to support our substantial Maot Hittim effort through *Faith for Food***. *Faith for Food* is Shearith Israel and Masbia's new UWS food annex on Paved Paradise. Every Tuesday, Masbia supplies our neighbors in need with weekly groceries.

For Pesah, Masbia will be supplying ample Kosher for Passover food packages including chicken and other items that will feed a family for 8 days of Pesah. The packages cost \$18,000 (\$216 each) for about 80 families — if you can, please contribute so that everyone in need in our community can celebrate Passover with dignity.

*Donate at [www.shearithisrael.org/maot-hittim-5786](http://www.shearithisrael.org/maot-hittim-5786).*

**If you are sponsoring a package of \$216 or more, indicate "FFF" in the note field.**

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### To Help Someone in Manhattan with Food Insecurity

Email [CSIAnnex@masbiarelieff.org](mailto:CSIAnnex@masbiarelieff.org) with a name and cell phone number.

A trained Masbia representative will reach out regarding enrollment.

*Learn more about Faith for Food & contribute at [shearithisrael.org/faith-for-food](http://shearithisrael.org/faith-for-food).*

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## SAVE THE DATES

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Shabbat, April 25: **Siyyum HaTwain: A Community Shabbat Luncheon with Guest Speaker Prof. Susan K. Harris**

Monday, June 8: **Faith, Freedom, and the First Amendment**  
*A Symposium on Religious Liberty at Touro Synagogue*

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## COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

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Congratulations to **Rabbi Soloveichik**, upon the recent announcement by The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation of his being selected as a 2026 Bradley Prize Winner. This award honors individuals whose extraordinary talents have influenced American scholarship and ideas. Rabbi Soloveichik will receive the award at the Bradley Prizes ceremony in May in Washington, D.C.

To learn more about the Bradley Prize, visit [bradleyfdn.org](http://bradleyfdn.org).