

DEBAR TORAH *by* RABBI ROHDE

Know What to Look For, Yet Leave Judgment to the Skilled Diagnostician

The Torah in these chapters about leprosy and similar afflictions of the skin makes clear its concern with healing. The physical symptoms of disease could not be ignored, but had to be examined and studied carefully. Having survived a number of skin traumas recently myself, I am amazed at the Parasha's plethora of medical terms for various types of wounds. It's clear that the Torah feels that one must not jump to diagnostic conclusions too readily. Only a priest presumably subject to rigorous training whereby he can reach reliable conclusions is qualified to make decisive diagnoses.

The priest in his role of diagnostician is comparable to the judge in making legal decisions. Although many descriptive terms are used, some of which, you might think, might give rise to self-diagnoses and home-cures, our text makes clear that these cases must be brought before a trusted priestly authority. Not that the common man shouldn't know these things: On the contrary, the Torah in these sections gives plenty of descriptive terminology to all of Israel as to what they should be looking out for: "raised skin," "swelling," "scabs," "boils," "scars," "adhesions," "discolorations," "scaly patches," "streaks/stripes," "dried," "whitened," "reddened," "deep-seated," "spreading," etc. are possible meanings of the many terms used (we really don't understand all of them). But the more terms, the more they really require a skilled diagnostician to make distinctions between them, and to make a judgment call as to what the society should finally be concerned with.

For these diagnoses are far from a private affair: On the contrary, they are considered to have a profound impact upon the society. If the decision is reached that the patient has been cured and purified, or the wound is not overly concerning, the society must accept the skilled diagnostician's decision. Doubtless there would be cases where it was a difficult decision and various concerns had to be triaged. But the priest had to be trusted, and not second-guessed. Just as complex laws were to be known to all the people, who definitely have a role to play in seeing to it that justice is served, so too the Torah gives a complex of medical conditions which must be watched for and observed carefully, but entrusted to the skilled diagnostician to finally decide. For just as there may be but a hairbreadth between good and evil, so in competing diagnoses there may be but a hairbreadth between health and illness.



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL
The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Shabbat Tazria-Metsora-Rosh Hodesh

April 17-18, 2026 | 1 Iyar, 5786

SCHEDULE

Hertz: Parasha: 460 Rosh Hodesh: 695 Haftarah: 945
Kaplan: Parasha: 556 Rosh Hodesh: 814 Haftarah: 1266

Candle Lighting | 7:20 pm

Evening Services | 7:00 pm | Main Sanctuary

Zemirot | 8:15 am | Main Sanctuary

Shahrit | 9:00 am | Main Sanctuary

Tot Shabbat & Youth 5+ | 10:00 am | Fidanque Youth Room

Jr. Congregation | 10:30 am | Little Synagogue

Kiddush | following services | *Sponsored by Gillian & Simon Salama-Caro, in loving memory of Gillian's father, Martin Halperin*

Shabbat Afternoon Pirkei Abot Class | 6:30 pm | Rabbi Soloveichik

Teen Shiur | 6:30 pm | Baruch-Lev Kelman

Evening Services | 7:15 pm

Habdala | 8:17 pm

Yom HaZikaron begins on Monday night, and Yom HaAtzmaut begins on Tuesday night.

Weekday Service Times

Mornings:

Sunday: 8:05 am

Monday-Friday: 7:05 am

Evenings:

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

THIS MOT'ZAEI SHABBAT

A Special Invitation by Israeli Bronfman Fellows

We warmly welcome **Amitim**, 21 diverse 12th grader **Israeli Bronfman Fellows** and their staff. Congregants are invited to join them after Shabbat Evening Services for Habdalah, song, their talks about how this war has impacted them, their hopes and concerns for the future, and what it means to meet with American Jews right now.

COMING UP

Registration Deadline: THIS MONDAY

Siyyum HaTwain: A Community Shabbat Luncheon

with Prof. Susan K. Harris

for the Mark Twain Reader, Admirer, or Curious

Shabbat, April 25 | Following Morning Services

This past year a group of congregants honored American literary icon, Mark Twain, by divvying up his oeuvre and reading it all. Come enjoy a community luncheon with congregants and friends who joined the "CSI Mark Twain Book Club," as well as anyone who would like to learn (more) about Mark Twain from our special guest and Twain expert, Dr. Susan K. Harris. The luncheon will be a relaxed buffet conducive to discussion, readings, and interaction in the Elias Room. It's sure to be as full of insightful and witty conversation as Twain himself. **Register by Monday at shearithisrael.org!**

Shearith Israel is a proud co-sponsor

Tekes Ma'avar: From Yom HaZikaron to Yom HaAtzmaut

THIS Tuesday, April 21 | At Lincoln Square Synagogue

7:30 pm Minha, followed by a Tekes Ma'avar

Admission is free but registration is required - sign up at lss.org

KIDS KORNER

To win a raffle ticket at kiddush, find Dalya & Jake with the answer to this riddle:

*On houses, clothes, or even skin,
Strange marks may suddenly begin,
You step away till they depart—
What's this called? It's _____.*

Coming up next: **The Lag La'Omer Amazing Race**
Shabbat Afternoon, May 2

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mazal tob to **Judy & Marty Grumet**, upon the birth of a grandchild, Saadia Zusha, born to their children, Daniella & Duvi Grumet.

COMING UP

In honor of the US Semiquincentennial

SAVE THE DATE

Faith, Freedom, and the First Amendment:

A Symposium on Religious Liberty

Monday, June 8 | At Touro Synagogue, 72 Touro Street, Newport, RI

Consider joining on Monday, or plan to spend the entire weekend with us in Newport (but book your accommodations now - Newport hotels go fast! And do let us know).

Full schedule coming soon!

Faith, Freedom, and the First Amendment: A Symposium on Religious Liberty



HELD AT
Touro Synagogue
72 Touro Street, Newport, RI

HOSTED BY
Congregation Shearith Israel, New York City and
Congregation Ahavath Israel, Newport



EMCEE and
KEYNOTE SPEAKER:
Rabbi Meir Soloveichik

FEATURED SPEAKERS



Rabbi Dr. Stuart Halpern
Author of *Esther in America*, and,
*Proclaim Liberty Throughout the Land:
The Hebrew Bible in the United States*



Dr. Tevi Troy
Presidential scholar and author,
and former Deputy Secretary of HHS
and senior White House aide

