

DEBAR TORAH *by* RABBI ROHDE

Consciousness of Sin as Prerequisite for Holiness

In delineating how Aaron shall come before God into the inner part of the Holy Place, the first requirement our text makes is that he must bring with him a bullock for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. The text later makes clear that these offerings are to make atonement for Aaron himself and his household. The first thing the High Priest must be conscious of in going before God is sin which requires atonement. And the priest's personal ram burnt offering, which is not as well described here, also seems to be a sacrificial atonement for the priest's sin. Of course, our Parasha is requiring this sin-offering and atonement following upon the death of Nadab and Abihu, and can be construed as part of the atonement and purification process in the wake of their great sin. But we are later told that his same rite of purification and atonement is to be performed regularly as a regular, periodic Atonement ritual which comes to be part of our Day of Atonement service. Thus even when there is no particular sin committed recently, the Priest must approach God bearing a sin-sacrifice and seek forgiveness, atonement, and purification for his sins and his household's, before he can make offerings for all of Israel.

I have often remarked upon the great consciousness of sin, of guilt and of liability for our misdeeds in Judaism and its daughter Biblical religion, Christianity. Islam has some of this, although I have always felt it has much less. Ancient Greek pagans had had little of this left, their native term for sin, "hamartia," having become a term in the Greek tragedies, as I have noted elsewhere, more of a fatal character flaw. I don't sense the great consciousness of sin in modern Eastern religions either.

I, for one, think that this consciousness of sin in Judaism and Christianity is one of Judaism's great heritage legacies to the West. We owe Aaron's dead sons a huge debt, perhaps, for bringing this sense of sin and guilt to the fore. In seeking to offer incense on their own they had lost any sense of their own native unworthiness, as mortal humans steeped in sin, to offer anything of their own accord. In requiring a sin-offering before coming before God, the Torah demands that Man face and acknowledge his own essential unworthiness. In seeking to come close to God in sanctity and be righteous we must first sacrifice our egos and admit and confess how much we are unworthy and unrighteous, so greatly falling short.

It is interesting that civil law makes its appearance in Leviticus, a book about sacrifice and purification. This makes clear that civil statutes are also part of purification and contamination. Violation of a civil statute is not merely a "crime," it is a sin against God, a stain upon the offender and a contamination of the society, and requires purification and atonement as much as any other contamination and lack of purity and holiness. Such sins as robbery not only require restitution, they require a sacrificial offering to God to atone for the sin present in the society. Our concept of sin, a notion of how much we fall short in unworthiness and require purification, is what ultimately makes true holiness available to us. If Socrates is the wisest man because he is aware of how little he knows, then the Torah makes its followers the holiest through its making them aware of the many realms in which they may fall short and fall into sin. The first prerequisite for becoming holy is to become aware of the ubiquity of sin.



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL
The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Shabbat Ahare Moth-Kedoshim

April 24-25, 2026 | 8 Iyar, 5786

SCHEDULE

Hertz: Parasha: 480 | Haftarah: 511

Kaplan: Parasha: 584 | Haftarah: 1168

Candle Lighting | 7:27 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

Siyyum HaTWain Luncheon | following services | Elias Room | For registered guests | *Registrants are encouraged to go directly to the Elias Room after services*

Congregational Kiddush | following services | Levy Auditorium

Shabbat Afternoon Class | 6:40 pm | Baruch-Lev Kelman

Teen Shiur will not meet this week.

Evening Services | 7:25 pm

Habdala | 8:25 pm

Weekday Service Times

Mornings:

Sunday: 8:05 am

Monday-Friday: 7:05 am

Evenings:

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

SAVE THE DATE: June 16, 2026

5786 Spring Gala

A unique Semiquincentennial experience curated by Rabbi Soloveichik

Mark your calendar and stay tuned for the big reveal.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mazal tob to **Nicole & Raanan Agus**, upon the birth of a granddaughter, Tiferet Rivka, born to their children Gabi & Rav Elie Lerea in Israel. Congratulations as well to great-grandparents, **Renee & Avie Schreiber**.

Mazal tob to **Berel Soloveichik** upon becoming a Bar Mitzvah this Shabbat in Israel. Congratulations as well to **Rabbi & Lyaliza Soloveichik**.

Congratulations to **Lucienne Carasso** on the recent publication of her new book, *The Indigenous People of Israel/Palestine: The Return of the Jews to Their Ancestral Homeland*, available on Amazon and other booksellers.

Welcome to a delegation of **Israeli leaders of mechinot** who are joining us for Shabbat morning services. They were brought to New York by Shazur whose mission is to create greater solidarity between Israelis and American Jews through increased exposure and interaction.

Welcome to Mark Twain expert, **Prof. Susan K. Harris**, and her husband William J. Harris, who are joining us this Shabbat for our Siyyum HaTwain luncheon.

KIDS KORNER

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

*Clothes can be cozy, soft, and neat,
But mixing some fabrics isn't a treat.
Wool and linen must stay away,
What's this mitzvah called in the Torah and today?*

The Lag La'Omer Amazing Race

NEXT Shabbat Afternoon, May 2 | 4:00 pm | with Jake & Dalya

RSVP at shearithisrael.org/lag-laomer5786.

Seeking Readers: **Girls & Young Women's Book of Ruth Reading Shabuot II, Shabbat, May 23 | After Morning Services**

Open to girls and young women through college age. Encourage your daughter or granddaughter to participate in this year's reading! Contact lirohde-csi@yahoo.com.

You can also sponsor kiddush in honor of our readers!

COMING UP: SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL PROGRAMS

Jewish History Tour of Central Park

Presented by the Shearith Israel League | Sunday, May 17 | 4:30 pm

Annual Chatham Square Memorial

Memorial Day, Monday, May 25 | 10:30 am | Chatham Square Cemetery

Special Guest Speaker: Joshua Obstfeld, FBI Counterintelligence

With remarks from: Mikhael G. Smits, Captain, US Army

Registration is now open!

Register at shearithisrael.org/faith-freedom-symposium



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

June 8, 2026

11:00 am - 12:30 pm | followed by collation

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

CONFIRMED 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 of,
*The Shifting Twenty-First Century
Presidency: Assessing the Implications
for America and the World*

REGISTRATION
REQUIRED

\$10/person

