

DEBAR TORAH *by* RABBI ROHDE

Power Exercised Responsibly Can Bring Man Closer to God

Noah fulfills the mission for which his name destined him: to ameliorate God's grievous curse upon the Land, Man, Woman, Cain, and Lemekh I's descendants in the Generation of the Flood. Noah does this by "walking with God," seeking to follow God's will and earn God's goodwill through his sacrifices. Although God does not specifically ask Noah to sacrifice, Noah is told to gather seven of the "pure" birds and beasts and just two of the other species. The "purity" of these animals concerns whether they are types the Torah's later laws deem fit for sacrifice. Later kosher food laws permit these animals as food, but verse 9:3, which allows Noah's family to eat all kinds of animals, suggests they did not keep kosher. Verse 8:20 makes clear that the extra animals were provided specifically to make this sacrifice possible. As I wrote last week, Noah's name spelled backwards reads "חן (hen)," the term for Favor or Grace, and here Noah soothes God with his voluntary sacrifice. Noah is also called "righteous" at the beginning of this week's reading because he follows what God wants him to do in building the Ark. Through Noah's sacrifice and the Rainbow Covenant, Noah explicitly relieves God's curse upon the Land. Mankind does not return to the Garden of Eden, for Man's inclination remains toward Evil. But Noah ameliorates the curse: Man must toil to till the soil, yet God swears a Covenant with Noah that seasonal cultivation will not be unduly plagued by unseasonable rain and weather. The phrase "as long as the earth exists" is a swearing formula whereby God swears by the Earth, while the Rainbow in the Cloud serves as a kind of Sky Witness. Predictable seasons enable Man to meet his needs with greater security. Noah may not remove the Curse of Eve's womb entirely, but God blesses Noah's family with the original blessing of fecundity and reproduction given to Adam and Eve.

Moreover, Man regains his conquering dominion over Earth, temporarily suspended during the Flood when God once again took over the reins of power. However, this dominion is restored on the explicit condition that Man use it to control violence against his fellow man. No longer can Cain object, "Am I my brother's keeper!" We did not hear this condition when Adam and Eve were originally told to conquer the Land. Perhaps God originally assumed Man would be naturally Good and peaceable. But having witnessed Man's inclination toward Violence and Evil, God restores dominion on condition that Man be answerable for investigating and preventing the Earth from ever again falling completely into lawlessness and violence. From now on, Man's power is explicitly linked with responsibility.

I have sometimes understood this transfer of responsibility for enforcing Justice to Man as a Divine retreat from the World. From now on, God seems to have decided, violence against humankind—violence against the very Image of God—is Man's problem, not God's. God places the responsibility for preventing and avenging murder, the profanation of His Very Image, in Man's lap. Yet entrusting this responsibility to Man could also be understood as involving God more deeply in His World. God now swears to seek justice for every murder, not merely when violence becomes widespread. Man and God actually become more alike, and closer, as Man assumes greater agency and responsibility for the affairs of the world. The Rainbow Covenant brings Noah closer to God than Adam had been, although this closeness does not last for Mankind. Noah's own son Ham, father of Canaan, does not follow his father's righteous ways. And at the Tower of Babel, Man abuses the power restored to him, seeking to rival God's Power. Pride in the Power of Man's works can distance Man from God. This will necessitate a new Covenant with a family whose grasp of power will be conditioned upon swearing eternal fealty to God's Dominion as Vassal for all time. But this Covenant will bring God even closer to Man than ever before.



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Shabbat Noah

October 16-17, 2026 | 6 Marheshvan, 5787

Scholars-in-Residence:

Rabbi Dimitry Ekshtut & Erica Frankel

SCHEDULE

Hertz: Parasha: 26 | Haftarah: 41

Kaplan: Parasha: 26 | Haftarah: 1054

Candle Lighting | 5:56 pm

Evening Services | 6:00 pm | Main Sanctuary

Scholar-in-Residence | following services | Erica Frankel | "The Architecture of Belonging: The Teivah and the Spiritual Work of Friendship"

THIS WEEK AT TOURO SYNAGOGUE: **Friday Night Lights: Newport Premiere** | Rabbi Soloveichik

Zemirot | 8:15 am / **Shahrit** | 9:00 am | Main Sanctuary

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

Jr. Congregation | 10:30 am | Little Synagogue

Scholar-in-Residence | following services | Rabbi Dimitry Ekshtut | "A Tzaddik in a Fur Coat: Lessons in Leadership from Noah"

Kiddush | following the Scholar-in-Residence

Shabbat Afternoon Class with our Scholars-in-Residence | 5:05 pm

| Rabbi Dimitry Ekshtut & Erica Frankel | "Yefet in the Tents of Shem and the Paradox of Assimilation"

Teen Shiur | 5:05 pm | Baruch-Lev Kelman | "Why Flood? There are More Efficient Ways to Destroy the World?"

Evening Services | 5:50 pm

Habdala | 6:44 pm

Weekday Service Times

Mornings: Sunday: 8:05 am | Monday-Friday: 7:05 am

Evenings: Sunday-Thursday: **5:45 pm**

THIS SHABBAT

**Welcome to our Scholars-In-Residence:
Erica Frankel & Rabbi Dimitry Ekshtut
This Shabbat, October 16-17**

Joining us this week are Scholars- in-Residence Erica Frankel & Dimitry Ekshtut. Erica and Dimitry live next door in our parsonage, serving as the leaders of Base Manhattan. They will be addressing the *kehillah* three times: after Friday Evening Services, after Shabbat morning services, and on Shabbat afternoon. Give them a warm welcome at kiddush!

NEXT SHABBAT

5787 New York Season Premiere of *Friday Night Lights*

Rabbi Meir Soloveichik

Friday Night, October 23 | Following Friday Evening Services

5787 Season sponsored by the Julis-Romo-Rabinowitz family

Sponsorships available at shearithisrael.org

COMING UP

Learn more at shearithisrael.org

**Shearith Israel Book Club Luncheon | *Between the Wars:
Jewish Characters in 1920s & 1930s American Literature*
Shabbat, October 31 | after Morning Services**

You don't have to be a book club member to enjoy this congenial luncheon with insights and guided discussion from Professor Shaina Trapedo of Yeshiva University. But if you would like to read any of the 22 books, you can find them on our website. Register now!

*The Sisterhood presents: **Stitch & Fix is Back!***

Tuesdays | 1-4 pm | Fidanque Room | RSVP to rgedinger@gmail.com

Drop in, select an item from our synagogue vestments that need mending, then stitch and fix.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

We welcome the following new members to our growing Shearith Israel family:

Sergio Alcayde (welcome back!)

Samuel Oppenheim

Thank you to the **Neumark Family** for their generous support of the latest printing of our Daily and Sabbath Prayerbooks, dedicated in memory of Deborah and Melvin Neumark.

Copies may be ordered through our website or by contacting the synagogue office.

Congratulations to **Janet Kirchheimer**, upon the screening of her film *AFTER: Poetry Destroys Silence*, showing on October 29 at Manhattan University.

This week, Rabbi Soloveichik, Parnas Lou Solomon and Beth, and others are spending Shabbat at Touro Synagogue with our friends at Congregation Ahavath Israel.

COMING UP

Learn more at shearithisrael.org

*Shearith Israel Members are cordially invited to this very special program
Presented by Congregation Shearith Israel and the Japan Society*

Because One Ought

Celebrating a Japanese Story of Courage, Hope, and Renewal

Monday, November 2 | Doors Open at 6:30 pm

Event starts at 7:00 pm (following 6:30 pm Evening Services)

*Featuring: **Rabbi Dr. Meir Soloveichik**, moderator | **Ambassador Satoshi Katabira**, Consul General of Japan in NY | **Kristina Reiko Cooper**, virtuoso cellist, composer, and producer | and more!*

Join us for this first-of-its-kind music and storytelling event celebrating the moral courage of Chiune Sugihara and Setsuzo Kotsuji, Japanese heroes who risked their careers and safety to help Jews escape the Nazis during the Holocaust. *RSVP to specialevents@japansociety.org*.

Semiquincentennial Event at Fraunces Tavern

"Between Crown and Congress:

New York's Jews During the American Revolution"

Monday, November 2 | 6:30 pm | Free for Shearith Israel Members

Fraunces Tavern Museum, 54 Pearl Street

Rev. Z. Edinger will explore how New York's small Jewish community experienced the American Revolution and emerged fundamentally transformed by it. By examining the lives of figures such as Gershom Mendes Seixas, Myer Myers, Uriah Hendricks, and the Gomez and Hays families, together with the stories preserved in Shearith Israel's ritual objects and archival documents, we gain a more nuanced understanding of Jewish life during the conflict than the familiar narrative of Patriots versus Loyalists. **Members, use our code "FRAUNCES" to register for free at tinyurl.com/fraunces-tavern!**

KIDS KORNER

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

*After the great flood, the people had a plan,
They built a tall tower as high as they can.
God mixed up their words, and they began to babble,
What was the name of their famous tower?*

Parent Child Learning: Siddur Decorating

Motzei Shabbat, November 14 | 6:30 pm | Dalya & Jake | Free; registration required

Join us for the first session of the season! Spend special time learning, creating, and connecting with Dalya and Jake as we dive into the world of tefillah. Everyone will decorate their very own Siddur covers for the Siddur booklets we use every week in Jr. Congregation. Come ready to learn, decorate, and make your siddur uniquely yours! Pizza will be served.

Sephardic Shabbaton for High School Students in NYC

Shabbat, November 6-8 | Hosted by Shearith Israel

Special rate for CSI Youth teens: Only \$65! Contact breiss@shearithisrael.org.