The Mekael and his Neighbor, Midrashic Architecture
Ilana Gadish, Yoetzet Halakha

The Sages who authored the midrashim would have been great architects and interior designers. They are so often concerned with placement of texts, why words or topics are arranged in certain ways, why certain portions of the Torah are juxtaposed to others. Parashat Emor is a paradigmatic example of textual masoretic, and the accompanying midrashic response. The parashah outlines the rules and restrictions of the Kohanim in their service in the Mishkan, guidelines for bringing sacrifices, the Shabbat and holiday offerings, the kindling of the Ner Tamid (eternal flame) and Menorah, and the twelve loaves of the Lechem HaPainim, the showbread. Immediately following the verses discussing the Lechem HaPainim, the Torah relays the story of the m'kellelthe blasphemer. What connection does the m'kellel/have with the Lechem HaPainim?

Vayikra Rabbah, the aggadic midrash on the book of Vayikra, gives three reasons for this peculiar juxtaposition, based on the opening words of the sentence “sayetze tzedek...” and the son of an Israeli woman went out...” focusing on the word “sayetze” — went out” (Vayikra Rabbah 32:3). The midrash asks: “Me’beichan yatzar From where did he go out?” The second of these three responses of the midrash reads as follows:

“We went out’ from the section of verses in the Torah above, as it is written ‘and you shall take fine flour and bake it into twelve loaves’ (Vayikra 24:5). He [the blasphemer] said: It is customary for a king to eat warm bread. Would he eat it cold?”

According to this author of the midrash, the placement of the story of the blasphemer comes immediately after the description of the Lechem haPainim because it is what motivated the blasphemer to curse God. Vayikra Rabbah 32:3 explains further by citing a Mishnaic source in Menahot 1:9, which dictates that the Lechem haPainim was not eaten before the 9th day after being baked for the Mishkan, and no later than the eleventh day. The midrash reveals the motivation: “What kind of God accepts cold, stale bread as an offering!” This is the reason of the placement of the story of the Mekael; it is based on mockery and disdain for the halakhot of the different offerings in the Mishkan, viewing them as sub-par.

As first glance, it seems extreme that an individual would curse God for having cold, not-quite-fresh bread in His Temple, and in return would receive an extreme punishment of death by stoning. What underlies this Midrash? Looking deeper, insights can be found by not just looking at the verses in the previous section of the parasha, but by looking at the verses that follow. Though the Sages of the Midrash did not bring the following verses to underscore their answer, their methodology teaches us to examine the verses that come after the story in addition to the preceding ones that they quote. In other words, in order to bolster the midrash, it is not only what precedes the m’kellel/text that informs its story (as the Midrash suggests), but also what follows it.

As soon as the m’kellel story ends and the ruling of capital punishment for cursing God is given, the next verse abruptly tells us that “If a man strikes down any human being, he shall be put to death” (Vayikra 24:17). This is followed by other legal rulings regarding harming other humans and (Continued on side panel)

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Welcome to Ilana Gadish, our Yoetzet Halakha, who is joining us for services this Shabbat morning, has authored this week’s devar torah, and will be introduced and available to meet you in person during Kiddush

CANDLE LIGHTING | 7:53 pm
MINAH | 6:45 pm
ZEMIROT | 8:15 am | Main Sanctuary
SHAHARIT (NISHMATY) | 9:00 am | Rabbi Soloveichik will deliver an Pirkei Abot shiur on the topic “From the Mishnah to Moby Dick: The Coffins of Queegue and Yohanan Ben Zakai”
TOT SHABBAT | Ages 0-4 | 10:00 am | Levy Auditorium
YOUTH GROUPS | Ages 5-12 | 10:00 am | Elias Room
JR. CONGREGATION WITH TORAH READING | Ages 5-12 | 10:30 am | Little Synagogue
KIDDUSH | Levy Auditorium | Sponsored by The Hebra Hased V’Am

TOPICS IN JEWISH PHILOSOPHY | Rabbi Hiday | 6:45 pm
For high school students | Held at the Hiday home, 1 W 85th St Apt. 6A

SHABBAT AFTERNOON PIRKEI ABOOT SHIUR | Rabbi Soloveichik on the topic, “A Terrible Translation: Why ‘Pirkei Abot’ Does Not Mean ‘Ethics of the Fathers’ ” | 6:45 pm | Spring semester sponsored by Lewis Lipsey

MINAH/ARBIT | 7:45 pm
KETER SHEM TOB | Rabbi Hiday | Main Sanctuary
HABDalah | 8:46 pm

Weekday Service Times
Morning: Sunday: 8:00 AM; Mon-Fri: 7:15 AM
Evenings: Sunday – Thursday: 6:30 PM (Minah & Arbit)
**UPCOMING EVENTS AND INITIATIVES**

**Annual Pre-Memorial Day Service: Honoring Veterans of the Revolution and Members of the Armed Forces**
This Sunday Morning, May 22 | 10:30 am
Chatham Square Cemetery

Join us at the Chatham Square Cemetery in Chinatown to honor veterans of the US Armed Forces including members of our congregation who participated in the Revolutionary War. Led by Rabbi Soloveichik, this special service is open to all members of the community (veterans are encouraged to attend.) The cemetery, active from 1682-1828, is located at 55 St. James Place, opposite Chatham Square. For details, please see shearthisrael.org/chatham-square-service. If you are still interested in transportation but have missed the sign up deadline, please contact zedinger@shearthisrael.org to inquire about space and payment.

**Calling all Veterans!**
Shearith Israel is honored by our members’ long history of military service – going back to the Revolutionary War! We are currently updating our “honor roll” of veterans for our congregational records. If you or a family member are a veteran or are currently serving in: the United States Armed Services, the IDF, or other military organizations, we would like to know. Please contact Zachary Edinger at zedinger@shearthisrael.org. Additionally, if you are interested in learning about Shearith Israel’s revival of the “Sephardic Post” of the Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America, please contact zedinger@shearthisrael.org.

**Shabu’ot Public Lecture**
When Jews Owned Slaves: An Often Untold Tale of History, Ritual and Jewish Law
Saturday Night, June 11 | 11:30 pm

Join us for what has become a popular Shabu’ot night tradition for the greater UWS and UES community. After the talk, guests are invited to mingle over cheesecake.

**Register now for PTTS Hebrew School**
Early bird pricing ends June 1
Polonies Talmud Torah School provides children and teens, ages 3-16, with a substantive Jewish education in a positive and engaging environment. Register at shearthisrael.org/hebrewschool

**Yom Yerushalayim at Shearith Israel**
Sunday Morning, June 5 | Rabbi Meir Soloveichik
Following 8:00 am morning services, Rabbi Soloveichik will deliver a special shiur in honor of Yom Yerushalayim.

**Graduation Kiddish and Scroll of Honor**
Saturday, June 11
Let’s spread the good news and celebrate the success and accomplishments of all our graduates from pre-school to PhDs! Go to shearthisrael.org/graduation2016 by Wednesday, June 8 to ensure your graduate is listed on our scroll of honor. Even if you cannot attend, consider co-sponsoring our graduation kiddush for just $36.

**Girls’ Megillat Ruth Reading**
First day of Shabuot | Sunday, June 12
The girls of our synagogue recite Megillat Ruth for the congregation in the Main Sanctuary after services. If your daughter would like to participate, please contact Mrs. Lisa Rohde at lirohde-csi@yahoo.com.
We are seeking sponsors and contributors for the kiddush in honor of our girls. For more information, contact breiss@shearthisrael.org.

**Contribute to the PTTS Hebrew School Scholarship Fund**
We offer many scholarships to ensure that all qualified applicants can receive a Jewish education. Please consider sponsoring a student for an academic year or semester or contributing to our Hebrew school scholarship fund with a tax deductible contribution of any amount. Go to shearthisrael.org/hebrew-school-scholarship-fund

**Weekday Judaic Education**
For details go to: shearthisrael.org/judaic-education

**Tuesday**
- Rambam’s Mishneh Torah | Rabbi Hiday | 7:45 am
- Feasts and Fasts: The Festivals in Jewish Thought - A Class for Women | Rabbi Soloveichik | 9:00 am
- Talmud Class: Tractate Rosh Hashana and the Philosophy of Jewish Time | Rabbi Soloveichik | 8:00 pm | Spring semester sponsored by Gregory Bell.

**Sunday**
- The Book of Kings | Rabbi Hiday | 8:40 am |
- Saadia Gaon’s Book of Beliefs and Opinions | Sjimon den Hollander | 9:30 am

**Don’t let us go dry.**
Be a scotch or arak sponsor. To sponsor or contribute go to shearthisrael.org/scotch-and-arak-sponsorships

**Please consider sponsoring a semester or a class.** Go to: shearthisrael.org/sponsoraclass

**Parnas Office Hours**
Louis Solomon would be delighted to meet with you. Please schedule a visit at parnas@shearthisrael.org.

Our next public tour is: Wednesday, June 15 at 11:00 am