DEBAR TORAH: THE SONG OF THE TIGER MOTHER ("WITH APOLOGIES TO AMY CHUA’S BATTLE HYMN OF THE TIGER MOTHER")

RABBI IRA REBOHE

"All the stories written in this book shall pounce rampant upon him..." (Deut 29:19) In describing the calymaty which will overtake "one whose heart turns away from the Torah," the sages go to god and give the word of the sages...who, repeating the words of the curse, may in his heart think himself protected, saying, ‘for me it will be safe, for in the brazenness of my heart I shall go." (Torah) The Torah uses the picturesque verb, "pounce." While the term can sometimes mean crouching to lie down, in this context it connotes a lion crouching, ready to pounce, or in the midst of the pounce itself, limbs rampant, spread apart, as it takes its prey down. I was unfamiliar with the term "rampant." (although I had known the related term, "rampage") until Professor H. I. Sober, our karate instructor at YU, used it to describe the symbolism of one of our positions, which represented the rampant lion (or tiger, as our karate organization was named Tora Dojo), the "Tiger Way Place" in Japanese, punning on "Torah." The basic definition of its hind legs, freeing the front limbs for attack, but most ritualistic depictions have a lion standing on only one leg, or in the air, with one or more legs spread for attack, so that each limb is extended in a different direction. A different purpose, each one poised to ter into its victim, wreaking retribution.

That fleshes out yet one more of the images in these parshiyot of the calyminities with which God binds the Children of Israel as a result of their not hearkening to God to serve Him and do His Will, loyally, and faithfully. One should ask why the scourges are so severe, but the answer given here, it seems, is the same line our parents give their children when they complain about being disciplined: “It’s not punishment— it’s a consequence.” A good parent doesn’t “punish,” but rather speaks out our terms and consequences, giving doses of encouragement as well as much admonishment, and then leaves it up to the child. If Israel will do that which is pleasing in the sight of God, then God will favor them and do what pleases Israel. If God’s actions will please God, the consequence will be that God will not reciprocate with favor. God is not playing, and God’s will is the law. We who are parents have to handle the consequences.

However, if we are simply being offered a choice between good consequences versus bad consequences, why are the blessings which so much shorter than the negative consequences, which go on and on? One answer is that learning to follow a discipline and to be a law-abiding citizen is going to be an extremely difficult process, constantly threatening to fail. True, our Parasha also says: “This Commandment which I enjoin upon you...is not far from you...but rather the thing is very close to you, in your mouth and in your heart, to do them (Deut. 30:11-13).” So it might seem that doing God’s will would be fairly natural and easy. If so, one would think, then, that positive encouragement should be at least a bit more equal to the admonishment. But the top-sider policy of the assurance of positive encouragement and persuasion of positive consequences, the Torah’s awareness of the reality: Discipline requires a tremendous struggle for man to learn. Realistically, it requires constant admonishment and eternal vigilance. We need constant reminders to be loyal to God, which is what many of the Torah’s commandments are about. Even though the very same admonition, all these commandments, the Torah is saying, we will need one more more. There is indeed, of course, calamitous failure. Now, consequences also have consequences, compound- ing each other and leading to other consequences. This compounding of conse- quences, too, is a good reason to compound the warning. And calamitous consequences, compounding each other can lead to catastrophic beyond all proportion, beyond bound, each disaster and calamity multiplying and magnifying the effects of the previous one exponentially. Ultimately, though, many lessons can and will be learned from calamity. I imagine God and Moses here addressing the fighters going into the land, telling them: (continued inside)
UPCOMING EVENTS AND INITIATIVES

High Holiday Seating—For Members and Guests
The deadline to reserve seats in the Main Sanctuary has passed. Members should have received their tickets by email (or mail). Seats may still be purchased for the Paran”al Service for $180 at shearithisrael.org/seating,reservations, 5777. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact sgross@shearithisrael.org.

Shabbat Tshubah Derasah
Rabbi Meir Soloveichik
Shabbat, September 23 | Following Morning Services
The Soul and the Scroll: The Sefer Torah of Kal Nidre
To co-sponsor the kiddush afterward, visit shearithisrael.org/shabbat-tshubah-derasa2017.

Volunteer for DOROT’s Rosh Hashanah Package Delivery
THIS SUNDAY, September 17 | 10:00 AM-12:00 PM
Share the joy and warmth of the holiday with an elder in a meaningful way by delivering a package of traditional holiday foods and visiting for about an hour.
For registration details, visit dorotusa.org/rosh.

Women’s Service
Parashat Lekh-Lekha, Saturday, October 28 | Little Synagogue
We are looking for leaders for our Women’s Service for October 28, Parashat Lekh Lekha. If interested in a part, please contact Mrs. Lisa Roheide at liroheide-csi@yahoo.com.

Register now for our Annual Simhat Torah Dinner and Ice Cream Extravaganza
Thursday Nights, October 12 | For Registered Guests
Join us for our annual delicious dairy dinner following havakot! To register or co-host an ice cream table at this year’s Simhat Torah dinner, please contact rabin@shearithisrael.org.

Help Hurricane Harvey Victims: Donate to the Rabbi’s Discretionary Fund
As the holidays draw nearer, we receive more requests for financial assistance from members of our community. Please consider donating to the Rabbi’s Discretionary Fund to help ensure a beautiful holiday experience for all members of our community.
Additionally, in light of the devastation of Hurricane Harvey, a significant portion of this season’s donations will go to a dedicated relief fund to help Houston’s Jewish community. To donate, please visit shearithisrael.org/discretionaryfund.

DEVAR TORAH: (continued from outside)
1) Drill, drill, drill! They must constantly drill and practice. Without constant drill, disciplining themselves as individuals, as well as disciplining themselves as a collective entity which can coordinate as a unit, they will accomplish nothing. I often quote, “And now, write down this song and teach it to the Children of Israel, put it in their mouths” (31:39) to show the Torah’s appreciation of the value of musical religious performance, and drill, as a model of the individual and collective, turning the individual to be in proper harmony with society.
2) Constant badgering and admonishment are good things. Although the Torah ends the Vezot Haberakha poem of blessing, it is primarily Haazina, the song of rebuke and warning, which the Torah bids us to rehearse and remember. The Torah appreciates the value of a good tongue-lashing in up to constant vigilance.

Each week, we learn from the School of Hard Knocks—from our sins, mistakes, and calamities—if we are to learn the lessons these experiences teach, painful as they may be. Beginning fighters have to be told, “You will get hurt. But you can learn how to roll with the punches and profit from your mistakes.” Experience can teach us to change our goals, and pain can be a potent motivator and teacher. Having suffered the consequences of our lack of discipline can help us to have a firmer resolve to follow the discipline and admonition the next time.

The preponderance of rules and discipline, badgering, threatening of consequences, and warning that we will inevitably fail but that we can learn from our mistakes has traditionally made us Jews, like our fellow Asian cultures, proponents of a Tiger-Mon style of teaching. Things have changed, and American Diaspora life has had its impact. Applying this specifically Jewish discipline when there are so many disciplines in which we must apply in an open question, is a Jewish question.
And we haven’t spoken much of a push to achieve, which finds its place elsewhere in our tradition. Overall, though, I don’t think, I’m mistaken when I hear the roar of the Tiger-Mon in our tradition’s rule, hounding, hard-nosed approach to life.

Sign Up Now for Meals in the Sukkah
Shearith Israel members and their guests are able to enjoy self- served catered meals in the beautiful Rabbis’ Sukkah. Registration and a cover charge of $12 per seat (including children) are required for each meal. We supply beverages, tablecloths and disposable tableware (fruit, finger food, and dessert)
Space in the sukkah is highly limited and registration is not a guarantee of seating. We will accommodate members and immediate family on a first-come-first-serve basis. Non-member guests will be accommodated depending on availability.
To register, visit shearithisrael.org/meals-sukkah-5778.

Sisterhood Sukkah Decorating
Monday, October 25 | 3:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Tuesday, October 3 | Three shifts: 8:00 am - 12:00 pm; 12:00 pm - 4:00 pm; 4:00 pm - 8:00 pm
It’s that time of year again, when we are preparing to decorate our beautiful Elias Room Sukkah! Please join us, teens and adults, women and men, to help decorate for the Succot Festival.
To participate, contact Mrs. Lisa Roheide (liroheide-csi@yahoo.com) or Aimee Margolis (art1show@verizon.net).

REGISTER NOW!
Another Very Special Shearith Israel Shabbaton
With Rabbi Meir Soloveichik
Next Stop: Charleston, South Carolina!
Friday, November 3 - Sunday, November 5
Spending Shabbat immersed in American Jewish history under the guidance of Rabbi Soloveichik and in the company of other intellectually curious and spirited friends is an amazing opportunity—just ask anyone who participated in our fantastic Monticello trip!
Next stop? Historic Charleston, SC, where we will spend Shabbat services and meals at Brith Sholom Beth Israel Synagogue.

Highlights will include:
• Three illuminating shabbat lectures by Rabbi Soloveichik
• A visit to Charleston’s oldest Synagogue, Beth Elohim
• Rabbi Soloveichik’s guided tour through the historic Coming Street Jewish Cemetery
• Rabbi Soloveichik’s one-of-a-kind tour of Fort Sumter
• Time to explore the historic Charleston Marketplace
• Delicious, fully catered meals

What was it for Americans to take up arms against one another, and what happened to Jewish families divided between the North and South? Questions like these, and so many more, will be engaged over an unforgettable weekend spent reliving history.
To register, visit shearithisrael.org/charleston

Donate to the UJA’s Coat Drive During the “10 Days of Awesome”
Wednesday, September 20 - Sunday, October 1st
Bin will be located outside Lippy Auditorium
Shearith Israel will be serving as a drop-off site for this city-wide coat drive between Rosh Hashanah and Kippur. Don’t wait for the bitter cold months to arrive before thinking of those who may need warm coats for the winter! Start gathering your spare coats and spread the warmth.