

August 25, 2022

Dear Shearith Israel family and Touro Synagogue Affiliates,

*Covid-19 and Our High Holidays.* Covid-19 numbers have again dipped a smidgen in our area. We will continue our protocols and procedures. We plan to be both outside (a special women's service for the bat mitzvah) and inside on Shabbat morning, celebrating the bat mitzvah of one of our native daughters, Neta Penina Wiznia, daughter of our dear members Rivka Shoulson and Marc Wiznia.

Have you seen the informative summary of how we are going to continue our Covid-19 protocols and accommodate everyone during our High Holidays? Please take a look. As we did last year, we will be offering both indoor and outdoor services. Most important, we will be together, or very largely so. Make your plans, sign up ASAP so that we have a good handle on how many people will be with us and how to space us. Members and friends, please join us.

[\*Usha, in Our Minds and in Our Eyes.\*](#) The Israeli kibbutz bearing the name "Usha" today is in the western part of the *Galil*. Near it are ruins that were once the site of the Great Jewish Court, the Sanhedrin. After the destruction of the Second Temple, the Sanhedrin traveled to ten places, including Usha. The Sanhedrin actually sat in Usha more than once. There are two main places where the Talmud discusses ten of the specific rulings made in Usha and that are still referred to as such. Pages 49b-50 of Tractate Ketubot, which we study as part of this week's Daf Yomi cycle, is one of them.

Why is it that knowing the history of the Sanhedrin's travels make the points of law made in the various places so much more vivid for us today? Is it that knowing the "where" gives a glimpse into what society was like and what problems beset them at that time and place? Now it is true that we remember where we were when significant events happened (one point each for your most vivid memories – and please be more creative than telling us where you were when Kennedy was shot or when human beings first walked on the moon). But this is the opposite: Here, we remember things more poignantly because of the places where they took place. The rulings *Made in Usha* are like that.

The very first ruling made addresses whether and for how long a parent needs to support a child that is between the ages of six and maturity (12 or 13). There are two points of relevance in the discussion. First, the Talmud treats the issue as a subspecies of the broader subject of charity, or *tzedakah*. Second, although the Talmud determines that parental support needs to last through minority, it also teaches that the rule should be enforced only gently. So for example, rather than fining or flogging a parent who shirks his duty of support, the Talmud teaches that public remonstrance is about as far as the authorities should go. The Talmud uses the example of a "town crier" who, turning over a box in a public square, standing on it, and asking publicly why so-and-so is different from a wild animal, since even a wild animal who is not deeply committed to its offspring will nonetheless show up to care for them. This is considered light rebuke.

This first of the rulings made in Usha is relevant to our current effort to get more of us to commit to our (still provisionally named) Tithing the Tithe Project – devoting one hour a week to a communal need. You might think that parental duty to children would be in a distinct category. Instead the Talmud treats it like other manifestations of charity. So too with Tithing the Tithe. Don't treat it better, but don't treat it worse, than other important charitable obligations. And don't be a shirker – it may be that gentle public ridicule beats getting fined or flogged – but not by much. Don't make us have to threaten any of that. Just step up and help. It's an hour a week. Which of us doesn't waste more than that every day? People are coming forward. I listed last week our first responders to T3, Rabbi Soloveichik and Leah Albek. The list grows (including for several who want to remain anonymous), and here are a few, with thanks for letting me "out" you for the sake of inspiring others:

- Sharon Sasson and Jodie Steinway (Sherizen), active members of our Young Families group, came by and did a major cleanup of the toys, games, and supplies in the Fidanque Youth Room. They purged and cleaned up making it a much tidier and play-friendly space. No one asked them to do this. It was just T3 in action. Thank you.
- Naftali Friedman, husband of our Trustee Zoya Raynes, has agreed to help with the Friday Night Greeters Club, or FNGC. Again, thank you.
- We continue to have a hard time making minyan on weekday afternoons. Can you commit to one hour a week?
- There are endless other ways to help. The only wrong answer is to give no help at all. Please make your commitment known.

*Built Back Better.*

*The Great Word Challenge.* The stars have already started to come out to capture a coveted two points for the best one-word slogan for returning, reviving, and rejuvenating, for consensus, community, and congregation. Aura Bijou got funky and coined her own word. Her entries are terrific if, uhm, a little clunky?

- *RejuveNation!*
- *Shulebration!* Time to *Shulebrate!*

Barbara Reiss offers:

- *Now!*
- *Emerge*
- *Yo!*

Michael Schulder made one entry, one word, one syllable, of breathtaking inspiration and brilliance, imho:

- *Here*

One instantly sees the double, triple, quadruple, quintuple entendres of “here”. It is an immediate call to action. It is reminiscent of our Patriarch Abraham’s *hineni*, that spoken manifestation of commitment to do what it takes no matter the hardships. It denotes place, as in our Synagogue, as in come back *here*. And it denotes space, a “here”, as in our observable universe. (Read Professor Sean Carroll’s *Something Deeply Hidden* if you want a lay-friendly treatment of the Many-Worlds Interpretation of quantum dynamics. You will there appreciate that “here”, in the sense of real space, is not such a simple notion.)

These are all great choices. But others need to be heard from.

*The Great Phrase Challenge*. Here too Barbara Reiss is trying to be helpful with:

- *Step up!*

Stanley Raskus helpfully followed with:

- *Onward and upward to 5783*

Jack Schenker’s is

- *Whatever the Lord does is for the best*

It’s hard to think of a better Slogan For Life. And Jack is eloquent and forceful in defending his choice. (Jack also has a forceful idea to get everyone to join the Tithing the Tithe project. Ask him directly, but watch out; he is tough and unprepared to take prisoners).

Finally for this week, Steve Smith, originator of the peerless *The Mulligan Years*, first offered

- *Shuva, shuva, ami (return, return, my nation)*, reminding us of *nachamu, nachamu, ami*, the words found in the Haftarah of Parashat *V’Etchanan* that kick-off our seven weeks of consolation leading up to Rosh Hashana.
- *Pastoral rectorial* [nearly disqualified for sounding scatological but then permitted]
- **חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקִדְמָם** [let us return to our days, as of old]

These creatively capture the theme of return. But even Steve tried to improve with a daring proposal: That we adopt a new (and temporary) name:

- *Congregation Shuva Israel*

The “shuva” is again for “return”. And, as Steve explains, the initials are the same CSI, “so you don’t have to change the towels”.

Here, too, our first week of suggestions has brought fabulous ones. They set the bar high. Come on, everyone, let’s supplement these with other great ones.

*Summer Song List.* Kudos and accolades continue to stream in for Lia Solomon’s putting together and Spotifying *The Shearith Israel Summer Song List 2022*. We linked to it last week and do so again [HERE](#). Did you notice that the New York Times published its own summer song list? This, after we gave them the idea and, indeed, after we gave them the songs, the links, and even the Spotify address. I forgive them the shameful aping of our great idea and work product without even so much as a thank you. The Times has *nothing* on us (crediting B.o.B. and Bruno Mars writing and singing [Nothing on You](#), which has as much right to claim novelty of the phrase “nothing on you” as we have to claim novelty in a summer song list).

*Great Signs and Wonders.* This occasional part of *Built Back Better* can’t be missed this week. Barbara Reiss captured the poster of The Rebbe as Moshiach in front of Temple Emanuel. Barbara says, deadpan yet deeply funny:

*Shearith Israel may be pre-denominational, but Moshiach is likely post-denominational.*



Thank you all. Bless us all. Shabbat shalom. Hodesh Tov (Elul, Shabbat and Sunday).

Louis Solomon, Parnas