

March 7, 2024

Dear Shearith Israel family,

**Our Year of Hope Campaign.** I wondered last week whether this week might be our last, or nearly our last, to solicit for our **Year of Hope** carpet-and-flooring Campaign. We had a surge of gifts at the end of last week, for which we are deeply grateful. We remain short of our goal of 100% participation, but more families have shared in this community undertaking than in any fundraiser in my memory (check out our long and growing list [here](#)). We are at or close to our goal of \$500k. So, think of this as **LAST CALL**. Please, if you haven't donated yet, [click here](#) and help us while helping yourself. Whatever you can afford, just please be a part of our Congregation's success in this project.

I have three other thoughts on the Campaign:

First, a slight snafu led Ritual Director Edinger rightly to remove the Shabbat Handout from general circulation as you entered our Synagogue this past Shabbat. The Handout inadvertently contained some incorrect times that Rabbi Soloveichik corrected in his announcements. Unfortunately, in pulling the Handout, a beautiful note by Rabbi Rohde on the back page was removed too. Skip the parts that refer to me, lest you enter an infinite loop of references. Read the rest in the corrected Handout [here](#), especially the message concerning the upkeep of our collective Sanctuaries, in antiquity and now.

Second, two of the contributors to the Campaign have been Alene Schneierson and her husband, Morris Krimolovsky. I don't mean to embarrass them, but the story is too wonderful not to share it with you. As Ritual Director Edinger tells it:

*Interestingly, the current carpet was installed in 1953 for about \$8,500 [!!!!]. The head of the carpet committee at that time was [Alene's] grandfather, Sam Schneierson, who generously donated half the cost of the carpeting in honor of his son Joel's marriage to Charlotte Rubenstein!*

How can all of us not want to be a part of this intergenerational success story?

Finally, Andrew Lipton sent in [this piece](#) on musician Bob Marley, discussing his "deep connection" to Judaism on occasion of the 43<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of his death in 1981 and, not incidentally, the premier of his biopic. This item belongs here and not just in our music section. I'm sure you understand why.

The Rabbi's lecture series supporting our **Year of Hope Campaign** will conclude this Shabbat after morning services. These have been excellent lectures. This week's title is, *The Incredible Judaica of Early America*.

**Don't Just Stand There, Do Something.** As part of the worldwide Daf Yomi learning cycle, last week we started Tractate Baba Metzia. This week we are learning pages 4 to 10. The discussion dissects

the various ways to analyze how a court will decide which of two disputants owns a piece of personalty (realty is also discussed, but the rules are different). Last week, we quoted the famous opening Mishna, that if two people grab or are holding a piece of personalty, each claiming it is theirs, then they both swear that they own not less than half, and if they so swear they split the object. Later we learn that in many cases they do not actually split the object but split the proceeds from its sale.

Among the interesting points of law in these pages is a discussion of how much self-help is tolerated by a court of Jewish law. If one person grabs the object away from the other, or falls on it, or in some other way forcibly exercises dominion over it, does or should Jewish law condone that? If you have been learning these pages, can you summarize succinctly how the Talmud comes out on that? (Two points from the judges and me. Way more for teaching Torah.)

A related and interesting topic concerns what actually happens in the court of Jewish law itself. The Tractate on page 6a discusses a case where two parties together bring in an object that they are fighting over, but once they are in court, before the Beit Din, one actually grabs it completely from the other. The law, it turns out, depends on the reaction of the one grabbed from. If he complains, then the standard rule applies (both disputants have to swear, and they split the object or its value). But what if he is silent. The Talmud is ok with temporary silence – after all, says R' Nachman, the aggrieved party is in a court of law. He expects the judges to condemn grabbing, so he does not need to raise a voluble objection. But what if he is silent throughout the proceeding? Here the Talmud says that lengthy or protracted silence is taken to be an admission of non-ownership, even if the Beit Din is sitting right there in front of the party. Wow, I say! Really? Yes really. The Talmud is creating an expectation that, if you want someone to believe you, don't just stand there. SAY SOMETHING! It's not a bad strategy – and a bit of a lesson to trial lawyers about the way triers of fact might think about your witnesses or your own arguments.

**Books (and Movies).** While some of us have been obsessing over Sci Fi, Joel Schreiber has been reading *The Money Kings*, by Daniel Schulman. Joel loved it. And since we love Joel – does the transitive property work on people and books? Humm.

Joel's description of the book is great, and typical (and marvelous) of Joel:

*Schiffs... Warburgs... Lehmans... Goldmans... Sachs... Morgans... Etc  
The turn of the century and their amazing contribution to the Jewish people... the American govt.  
Not religious as we understand it... Reform if anything... But the "pintel yid" that existed.  
And of course... all gone... Including Judaism.*

But back to Sci Fi. David Sable insists that the older contributions to the genre are unequalled today. He includes authors like Isaac Asimov and Robert Heinelen (*Stranger in a Strange Land* – grok – [see my email of Nov. 12, 2020](#)). David goes back even to Jules Verne, asking about his clairvoyance about the future, "how did he know?" David has a point (as always), but for my tastes I am

captivated by excellent modern Sci Fi; there is so much more science for good authors to use to send the imagination into orbit.

I wonder if our nextgen editor and author-in-her-own-right SM Rosenberg would agree. Last week we cited her own contribution to the genre. This week let's learn what she likes to read. A few examples:

- SMR immensely enjoys Michael A. Burstein's collection of short stories, [I Remember The Future](#)
- SMR also likes the Sci-Fi series, *The Vorkosigan Saga*, by Lois McMaster Bujold. She recommends that new readers start with either [Cordelia's Honor](#) ("if you don't mind a slower burn") or [The Warrior's Apprentice](#) ("if you want to get to the action sooner"). Says SMR: "It's a fantastically detailed universe, with complex and likable characters, great dialogue, and clever plotlines that frequently come together in satisfying ways."

Now, when we turn to Sci Fi movies, for David Sable it's easy – watch the old classics or *Dune 2*. SMR again has some recommendations:

- Of course, *Star Trek & Star Wars*, with a bonus [Galaxy Quest](#) because "if any Star Trek fans haven't seen *Galaxy Quest*, they need to do that"
- [Life](#), "which is set on the International Space Station. I love the character dynamics between the astronauts and the depiction of the lack of gravity. No spoilers, but it starts out feeling all light and optimistic and then takes a VERY sharp dark turn - you have been warned"
- [Edge of Tomorrow](#) - "great time-loop movie"
- [Minority Report](#) - "society that arrests people for crimes they're going to commit"
- [Gravity](#) - "Sandra Bullock trapped alone in space trying to get back to Earth"
- [Deep Impact](#) - "attempting to divert an asteroid about to hit Earth"
- [The Hunger Games: Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes](#) - "very dark but very well done, and had a lot of depressingly relevant things to say about war and power and the ways that people make moral compromises."

These from the Sci-Fi horse's mouth, so to speak. SMR these are great great great. I'm in. Others?

**Our Final List of Songs of Hope PLUS.** We are too full this week, so we will give the full list of songs for our new songbook next week. For now:

Howard Schranz picked up on Zachary Gorden's suggestion Israel Kamakawiwo'ole's version of *Somewhere Over the Rainbow* and actually compared Kamakawiwo'ole's to Sinatra's expressiveness in [It Was A Very Good Year](#). We forgive him that indiscretion, just like we forgive *Billboard 200* for calculating that Taylor Swift now has more weeks in the top 10 than did the Beatles. We also forgive Howard for the following:

*If you want to hear poignant expressiveness and yearning, I think the best example is Antony's version of the Leonard Cohen masterpiece "[If It Be Your Will](#)."*

I do not like Leonard Cohen. Beth does. And so it seems does most of the rest of music-listening humanity. The song at least does belong on this list. On it goes.

Billy Schulder fairly quips: "I don't quite understand where this list went and is going." He's right, but wrong. Billy recommends "*With a Little Help From my Friends*," by the Beatles, where we started our current voyage, and another by the Fab 4, [Getting Better](#), which is fun and not often sung but is a great song for present purposes. Somehow I think Billy fully understands our list, both where it went and where it's going.

In our final Israeli song section (for now, anyway), we have three new ones, one in Yiddish, two in Hebrew, all great.

First, Joel Maxman suggests [Gut Morgen](#) (*Good Morning*), by Mendy Twerski. The song is life-affirming and fun and begins at 0:35.

Second, Hayyim Obadya suggests [Hashana Inshallah](#) (*This Year with God's Help*), with words by Bezalel Aloni and music by Ofra Haza.

And third, Lynnette Gruenhut offers another great one, by Naomi Shemer, [מחר](#), a personal favorite and life-long ear-worm.

Thank you all. Bless us all. Shabbat shalom. *B'yachad* (united together). טוב יהיה טוב *Yihiyeh tov* (things will be good).

Louis Solomon, Parnas