

April 25, 2024

Dear Shearith Israel family,

Our Year of Hope. *Moadim L'simcha* and happy Passover to all. Many people stayed in New York, by the way, and the Rabbi's Shabbat HaGadol talk and services over the holiday were stately and quite moving. I hope that, wherever you are, you, your family, and our entire community are safe and well and as joyous as the circumstances permit.

Last week, I promised a short report on our **Year of Hope Carpet Restoration Project**. Well, we've got good news – and even *better* news. The good news is that we received five professional bids for the carpet and/or flooring work. Ari Sherizen and Barbara Reiss are picking through them, kicking the tires (or the carpet), and are doing their best, with the help of a specialized design professional, to see to it that we get the best quality work at the most reasonable price.

Now for the *even better news*. As mentioned, the project is essentially carpet replacement and floor maintenance or repair. The competing bids tell us that we should be able to accomplish the project within the budget that we raised funds for (barring some unknown unknowns). What we didn't think we would be able to afford is, in addition, strengthening and repairing the worst of our pews.

The even better news is that it is turning out that we may well be able to afford that, too. That is very much our hope; the optimal time to repair the pews is when the old carpet gets removed and before the new carpet gets installed. It's not certain to happen. We will know more as we proceed to see how bad the flooring is. The only downside to expanding the scope of the repairs to include the benches is that the entire project may take longer to accomplish. To me, and frankly to everyone I mentioned this possibility to, it is a tradeoff well worth making. Fixing the worst of our benches now, when they must be moved anyway, is a once-in-a-generation benefit, with the benefit largely going to the next generation. How can we not do it? So, without promising anything, if your bench is particularly bad, like it has nails sticking out or feels like it is going to collapse under you, please email us. This is really very exciting.

HAPPY PALINDROME WEEK! Last year, in my [email of 3/30/23](#), we recorded the palindrome weeks with what you all think are the greatest numbers of palindromes – ten in a row. I still haven't heard anyone getting us to a number greater than 10 but still think we are not thinking hard enough. In any case, happy 42024, 42124, 42224, 42324, 42424, 42524, 42624, 42724, 42824, and 42924.

Public Policy or Natural Justice in the Talmud. We are this week studying pages 53 to 59 of Tractate Baba Metzia as part of the worldwide Daf Yomi learning cycle. With your permission, I want to comment on a legal debate that occurred *last* week, since it is so unmistakably modern.

On page 51b, the Talmud records a debate about whether a merchant can extract a promise from a buyer in advance to waive any claim of price fraud. One Sage permits the waiver; another does not. Even for those of us practicing law in “freedom of contract” states (New York being one of the world's shining examples) – where the law permits two parties to a transaction to agree to almost anything

that is not criminal or illegal – there still comes a point when the law – that brooding omnipresence, as it was described in law school – refuses to permit even two willing parties to contract away responsibility. In US terms we speak of “public policy” as being a bar to freedom of contract at the extremes. In private international law settings, such as in international arbitrations and similar cross-border controversies, similar terms are used such as “natural justice.”

There are few things as maddening for a client as thinking you have a clear and binding agreement, which should be readily enforced by an appropriate judicial or arbitral tribunal, only to be faced with the specter that a judge or other decisor will impose notions of public policy or natural justice to upend your reasonable expectations and the plain language of the governing legal instrument.

This concept, of interfering with the free market of contracts, is related to the raging debate today over equality of opportunity vs forced equity of results. Many of us cherish the former and find the latter obnoxious. Where does the Talmud stand on the issue? Is the rule not permitting waiver of the right to void certain “fraudulent” sales contracts, shown here on page 52b of Tractate Baba Metzia, relevant to the equality-of-opportunity vs equity-in-result argument? In any case, the struggle to find a line where even merchants are prohibited from contracting does seem to be as ancient as our Talmud. Fascinating.

Books. Great thanks to Sergio Wolkovisky, not only for being a minyan mainstay, but for recommending *The Story of Hebrew*, by Lewis Glinert. Sergio explains:

I heard many years ago David Remnick in a talk say that the rebirth of Hebrew was a miracle and that someone should write a book about it ... After looking for such a book for many years, reading a biography of Ben-Yehuda and other books, none answered the question of how exactly Hebrew survived and how it was resuscitated. Lewis Glinert's The Story of Hebrew is that book. ... Great book, many interesting and fun facts and an easy read.

Sergio also enclosed an independent blurb on the book, which I quote below but which, actually, isn't as good as Sergio's above:

The Story of Hebrew by Lewis Glinert covers the history of Hebrew from the earliest times to modern Israel. ... Glinert illustrates how Hebrew was able to survive in the diaspora. ... The book also covers fascinating aspects of how to standardize the language, punctuation, spacing, etc. The book ends with how Hebrew became the language of modern Israel (which was not a given) and how it has been brought up to date to our times.

Sergio, many thanks.

GOAT Songs Long and Short. We are nearing the end of this fun and collective crowd-sourcing of GOAT Long and Short songs.

GOAT Long Songs. As of last week, we had

- [Layla](#), by Derek and the Dominos (Eric Clapton)
- [In-a-Gadda-Da-Vida](#), by Iron Butterfly, is a loooong song, says Billy
- [Won't Get Fooled Again](#), by The Who
- [Season of the Witch](#), here by Al Kooper & Co. (which I don't love, btw)
- [American Pie](#), by Don McLean
- [Stairway to Heaven](#), by Led Zeppelin
- [The Rain Song](#), also by Led Zeppelin
- [Alice's Restaurant](#), by Arlo Guthrie
- [Hurricane](#), by Bob Dylan
- [The End](#), by The Doors
- [Paradise By the Dashboard Light](#), by Meatloaf
- [Nights in White Satin](#), by The Moody Blues
- [Bohemian Rhapsody](#), by Queen
- [Funeral for a Friend/Love Lies Bleeding](#), by Elton John
- [Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands](#), by Bob Dylan
- [Band on the Run](#), by the incomparable Paul McCartney
- [Murder Most Foul](#), by Bob Dylan
- [The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald](#), by Gordon Lightfoot
- [The Four of Us](#), by John Sebastian [Jungleland](#), by Bruce Springsteen
- [Desolation Row](#), by Bob Dylan
- [Like a Rolling Stone](#), Bob Dylan
- [Hey Jude](#), by The Beatles
- [Visions of Johanna](#), by Bob Dylan
- [Because](#), by The Beatles
- [The End](#), by The Beatles
- [Down by the River](#), by Neil Young
- [Cowgirl in the Sand](#), by Neil Young
- [All Too Well](#), by Taylor Swift
- [Highway Patrolman](#), by Bruce Springsteen
- [Sing, Sing, Sing](#), by Louis Prima and Benny Goodman
- [MacArthur Park](#), written by the truly gifted Jimmy Webb and sung by Richard Harris

For this week, we have one more to add, suggested by yours truly:

- [I'll Never Find Another You](#), by the Australian group, The Seekers. I had to find the "extended fan version" to get it into the Long Song category. The lyrics are as beautiful as the Jimmy Webb lyrics in last week's [email](#). And, as with the Jimmy Webb song/lyrics combination, every verse of *Another You* conjures a depth of feeling (read uncontrollable tears). Here is just one of the stanzas:

*There is always someone
For each of us, they say
And you'll be my someone
Forever and a day
I could search the whole world over*

*Until my life is through
But I know I'll never find another you*

Belated condolences marking the passing of The Seekers' lead singer, Judith Durham, in 2022. Maybe we will find another her, but not a great many.

GOAT Short Songs. As of last week, we had:

- [Her Majesty](#), by The Beatles
- [Oxford Town](#), by Bob Dylan
- [One by One, Two by Two](#), by Burl Ives
- [The Shortest Song in the World](#), by Kenny Price
- [Life Song](#), by Mason Williams
- [Heart and Soul](#), by Hoagy Carmichael
- [Why Don't We Do It In The Road](#), by the Beatles
- [Till the Morning Comes](#), by Neil Young
- [Cripple Creek Ferry](#), by Neil Young
- [Stay \(Just a Little Bit Longer\)](#), by Maurice Williams and the Zodiacs

Our GOAT Long and Short Song lists are marvelous. The true team effort has arrived at an amazing array of great songs. But, just as George Harrison sings that [All Things Must Pass](#), all lists must end. Why? So that we can start another list, of course. Let's have a LAST CALL on GOAT Songs Long and Short.

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

Louis Solomon, Parnas