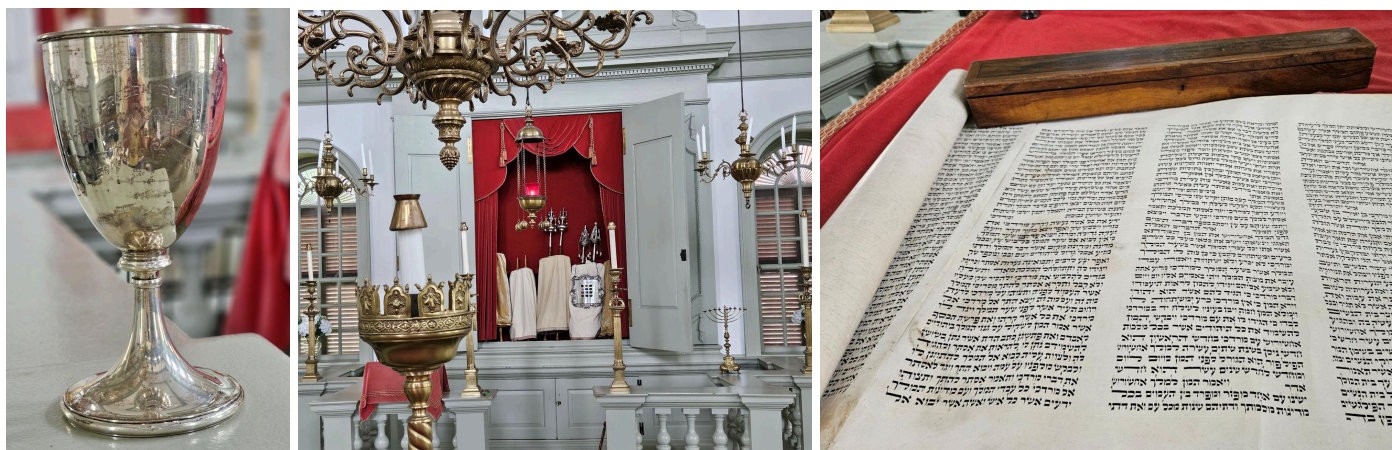


Dear Shearith Israel family,

Our Year of Renewal. The week since Shabuot brought our Congregation the sad news of the passing of Gilda Angel, wife of Rabbi Marc Angel, and, just this week, the passing of Col. Jonathan de Sola Mendes. The same week brought us happy news of the wedding of Daniel Marks, son of Eliza de Sola Mendes and grandson of Col. Mendes, to Kate Torrey, and of the wedding of Talia Schulder, daughter of Drs. Lu Steinberg and Michael Schulder, to Jonah Eidman. And this coming Shabbat we will celebrate our recent graduates. As a community, we grieve at our losses and celebrate our happinesses. [Turn turn turn.](#)

Touro Update. Some weeks ago, we discussed the need for us to travel to Newport to help our fellow Congregation, Ahavath Israel, reinvigorate Touro Synagogue. I am happy to report that some of us have gone up and others are planning trips for this Summer. To make the visit even more enjoyable, let me report three interim successes:

- When the old tenant left Touro Synagogue in April, a sizable number of ritual objects were removed from the Synagogue. All the objects that Shearith Israel demanded back at this time have now been returned. The Touro Synagogue Ark is not as abundant as our Sanctuary's, but it's gorgeous and glorious nonetheless. Here are some pics of a few of the returned items:



- We have hired someone to read Torah on Shabbat at Touro Synagogue so that there will always be someone there to read and to help make a minyan.
- Congregation Ahavath Israel has taken over the tour-guide service at the Synagogue. Great thanks to CAI's Aaron Ginsburg, who is a highly knowledgeable docent. See our webpage [here](#). And great thanks to Jim Herstoff and Paul Tobak, who are tirelessly working to revive Touro Synagogue.

Please help us by planning a visit.

Short and Pithy Aphorisms. As of last week, our list of super-short aphorisms included:

- *According to the labor is the reward.*
- *Seize the Day.*
- *When opportunity knocks, grab it.*
- *When you come to a fork in the road, take it!*
- *Watch Your Back*
- *Eudaimonia*
- *Amen*

For this week, Ritual Director Jay Harwitt wants to take us in a different direction. Jay asks whether the short and pithy phrases can't be in Hebrew and can't be from Hebrew Scripture. Jay suggests the following five:

- Leviticus 19:18 (**Parashat Kedoshim**) and its famous *וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כָּמוֹךָ*, or *love thy neighbor as thyself*. Jay says that “those three words were good enough for Rabbi Hillel to teach the Roman centurion the whole Torah”, but to emphasize Jay's point, the three words have infinitely more meaning than just that.
- Deuteronomy 6:4 (**Parashat VaEtchanan**), which include the six words of the Shemah: *שְׁמַע יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֶחָד*
- Isaiah 6:3 (Haftarah Yitro) (“holy holy holy is the G-d of hosts, Whose presence fills all the earth”)
- Ezekiel 3:12: *וַתִּשָּׂאֵנִי רוּחַ וְנִשְׁמַע אַחֲרַי קוֹל רַעַשׁ גָּדוֹל בְּרוּךְ כְּבוֹד יְיָ מִמְּקוֹמוֹ* (*Then a spirit carried me away, and behind me I heard a great roaring sound: “Blessed is the Presence of GOD, in its place”*)
- Exodus 15:18 (**Parashat B'shallach**). From the end of The Song at the Sea: *G-d will reign forever and ever*

How can one not appreciate these? Jay is right that there is no reason we should omit them. I confess that these aren't exactly what I was looking for, but maybe my thinking was too narrow.

The list remains open, from Scripture or not, in Hebrew or English. Many thanks to Jay for expanding our perspective on this.

Summer Movies for Paved Paradise. Of the dozens of suggestions listed last week, Bob Starkand wants to suggest none of them but instead offers a new one: *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* (1974). I don't happen to like the movie, but I do like Bob, so our current list includes it and is:

- *Exodus*
- *Lawrence of Arabia*
- *The Red Violin*
- *Yankee Doodle Dandy*
- *A Woman in Gold*, 1945 (Hungarian Film, subtitled)
- *Ida* (a Polish film, subtitled)
- *Casablanca*

- *12 Angry Men*
- *Inherit the Wind*
- *Raiders of the Lost Ark*
- *Wall E*
- *Any of the Toy Story movies ("preferably the first one")*
- *ET*
- *What's Up, Doc?*
- *Erin Brockovich*
- *Kazablan* (1973 choreographed musical, with Yehoram Gaon)
- *Les Aventures de Rabbi Jacob* (1973)
- *Cast a Giant Shadow* (1966)
- *Golda* (2023)
- *The Impossible Spy* (1987, "about Eli Cohen, done three decades before the Netflix production")
- *Chariots of Fire* (1981) [*now you're talkin'*]
- *Mivtza Yonatan/Operation Thunderbolt*
- *The Monuments Men* (2014)
- *Life is Beautiful* (1997)
- *Lupo b'New York* (1976, Eng subtitled)
- *The Chosen* (1981)
- *Shalom Y'all* (2003)
- *Gut Shabbes, Vietnam* (2008)
- *Hester Street* (1975)
- *Crossing Delancey* (1988)
- *Sum of All Fears* (2002)
- *The Out-of-Towners* ("the 1970 original, with Jack Lemmon & Sandy Dennis, not the remake with Steve Martin & Goldie Hawn")
- *It's a Mad Mad Mad Mad World* (1963)
- *Get Smart, Again!* (1989)
- *Batman* (1966)
- *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home* (1986)) ("the lightest and probably most imaginative film in its series. Nimoy had fun directing")
- *It Happens Every Spring* (1949)
- *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* (1974)

In terms of ranking our favorites, Michael Schuller likes the great movies with Jewish themes, like *Exodus*. Are there others who feel that way?

Joel Maxman offers his faves – and some reasons to boot:

- 1) *Lawrence of Arabia* ("because I've never seen it on a big screen")
- 2) *Kazablan* ("because I haven't seen it since it first opened in theaters")
- 3) *Chariots of Fire* ("because it's inspiring")

So that we have time to order and organize, LAST CALL. And when we do, promise you'll come and join me there; I'll share my popcorn with you.

Name that Parasha Tune. We are collecting tunes for **Parshiot Bemidbar, Naso, Behalotcha (this week's parasha), Shlach, and Korach**, which cover the first half of Sefer Bemidbar.

Andrew Druck shares more great suggestions:

For **Parashat Behalotcha**, where the parasha includes the Israelites “breaking camp to go to the promised land”, Andrew suggests:

- [On the Road Again](#), as sung by Willie Nelson
- [Light of Day](#), as sung by Bruce Springsteen
- [Long Walk Home](#), as sung by Bruce Springsteen
- [Land of Hope and Dreams](#), also as sung by Bruce Springsteen

When things change for the worse later in the parasha and in subsequent parshiot, Andrew suggests:

- [Blue Skies](#), as sung by Willie Nelson, which then turns into
- [Stormy Weather](#), as sung by Frank Sinatra, which then turns into
- [Tragedy](#), as sung by Thomas Wayne, and
- [Heartbreak Hotel](#), as sung by Elvis Presley, by the time we get to **Parshiot Shlach and Korach**.

These are brilliant.

The Case of Rabbinic Oaths. The global Daf Yomi learning cycle is this week learning pages 38-44 of Tractate Shevuot. We are in Chapter 6, which involves several new species of oaths and a number of tort-related topics that reminds us of the Baba Tractates. Among the new types of oaths discussed are those fashioned by the Rabbis. One in particular, a *שְׁבוּעַת הַיִּסּוֹת*, is discussed on page 40b and deserves a brief discussion as part of what I think of as a seismically important point.

Under Biblical law, there are only three times when a person is obliged to take an oath (two points for each person to get the right answer to all three). The rest of the many oaths discussed in Tractate Shevuot are Rabbinic in derivation. So one question to ask is whether, when the Torah says one must swear in only three circumstances, do the Rabbis have authority to create more? Plainly the answer appears to be yes, since our Tractate is full of them. That in itself is an arresting proposition, one demonstrating the novelty and wisdom of the Biblical-Rabbinic partnership that has literally made our religion.

Let's look a bit deeper. When the Torah says an oath is necessary/sufficient in three cases, it is teaching that the oath will be a sufficient answer in law to find a litigant liable or not liable. In saying that, the Torah is also saying that there are cases where to avoid liability one need **not** take an oath. A classic example is as follows: Under Biblical principles, if one admits to part of an obligation (I didn't borrow \$100 but do admit to borrowing \$60) then that person can be asked to take an oath to be absolved from paying the disputed balance of \$40. The Torah, on the other hand, does not require an oath if the defendant denies the *entire* amount. The Talmud and subsequent commentators try to understand the logic of that rule (e.g., a defendant would not have the audacity to deny the entirety of the obligation if

there was any truth to a part of it). Whether or not you think the logic works, the plain fact is that the Torah does not in every case require the defendant to take an oath in order to beat a claim.

In the part of Tractate Shevuot under discussion, our Sages do a very interesting thing. Because of a concern that, *in their day*, a defendant would too easily deny the whole, they created several institutions that go beyond (are arguably inconsistent with?) Torah principles. One of them is the institution of a שְׁבוּעַת הַיָּסָד, not translated by Schottenstein and translated as an “oath of inducement” by Sefaria. A *shevuat hessat* is a Rabbinically created oath that here is being imposed on a defendant who would otherwise want to deny the whole. Rav Nachman articulates the rule as deriving from the fact that even one who denies the whole is denying something regarding *monetary* sanctions, and in that case the Rabbis ruled that they could impose their own requirement.

Is this an example of significant Rabbinic legislating? The Torah says that you don’t impose liability for failing to swear when you deny the whole. And here come the Rabbis and say, well, if you won’t swear in that case, we will impose liability. How important is this principle? A little? A lottle? A really BIG amount? I think the last of these. What do you think?

Not Saying Tachanum After Shabuot. I mentioned last week that, for about a week after Shabuot, Shearith Israel (along with many other congregations) does not say *tachanun* in our morning and afternoon services. What can I say: if you don’t think that’s significant, then you are not remembering how long *tachanun* takes on Monday and Thursday mornings at our Synagogue. I knew we would get some great answers to the question, “why don’t we say *tachanun*”. And we did:

- Alexander אלכסנדר Grinberg, of Kisvei HaKodesh Research, teaches that:

Rama at the end of Hilchot Pesach in Shulchan Aruch mentions in passing that we don't say tahananun for about a week following Shavuot because one day is quite a short amount of time for everyone to bring their festive offerings, to which end there was an allowance made for whoever couldn't bring their offering on Shavuot itself to do so for a week following. I was not aware that Sephardim follow Rama in this regard, though I assume this is where the custom originates.

- Claude Nadaf teaches:

It is customary to omit Tachanun from Rosh Chodesh Sivan (the day before Shavuot) through the 12th or 13th of Sivan, depending on the specific custom of the community. This practice is based on the principle that Shavuot and the days following are a time of celebration and joy, and therefore penitential prayers are not recited.

More specifically, the Sephardic Aleppo Jews omit tachanun on the thirteen of Sivan in commemoration of the “Nes Musa” miracle saving the community from harm after an antisemitic libel.

- And Rabbi Mark Licht, our Ravdoc, teaches:

The absolution from tachanun is due to the yemei tashlumei korban (those making “aliyya laRegel” [who trek to Jerusalem for the festival] have seven days, even when the regel doesn’t last that long).

Note that among Ashkenazim, many 'mitnagdim' do say tahanun after Isru Hag [the day after the end of Shabuot], as per the Rama.

Look at all the Torah we are learning! And how wonderful it is that this respite is now over, and we go back to saying tachanun daily (!).

In this, our Year of Renewal, let us feel and express gratitude and pray *Hoshi'á nna, save us now.*

Louis Solomon, Parnas