

August 28, 2025

Dear Shearith Israel family,

Our Year of Renewal. Like the rest of the Jewish world, we greeted the new month of Elul on Sunday and Monday. Unlike the rest of the Jewish world, however, since Monday night, we have been saying Selichot Shearith Israel Style. We tack on to our evening service about four minutes of simplified and stirring selichot, with a stirring song-chant, followed by a shofar blast. We are readying ourselves, gently, for Rosh Hashana – that great Day of Do-Over! We say these selichot basically the entire month (from Elul Day 2 to the day before Rosh Hashana) and then for another week after Rosh Hashana. It's a nice way to ease out of summer and into the High Holiday season. Please come and participate.

Our new year naming opportunities are attracting some great suggestions:

- **Naming our Year.** Coming after *Year of Hope* and *Year of Renewal*, we now have
 - *Year of Engagement*
 - *Year of Ascent*
 - *Year of Pursuit*
 - *Year of Legacy* (“in recognition of the 250th”)

To that we add this week's excellent suggestion from Bonnie Barest:

- *Year of Allegiance*
- **Word of the Year.** After our past three years – where our Words of the Year were *Here!*; *b'yachad, or united, together; and gratitude*, we have for this year so far:
 - *Engagement*
 - *Redemption*

To that we add this week's suggestion from Bob Starkand:

- *Commitment*
- **Phrase of the Year.** After our past three years – where our Phrases of the Year have been *Kaminado kon buenos, or let's walk with good; Yihiyeh tov, or things will be good*; and *Hoshi'ana, or save us now* – we now have:
 - *To re-write history*, or in Hebrew *לשכתב היסטוריה* *Ishachtev historia*.
 - *May Mercy meet Truth*.
 - *Hatzlich'ana* (“the sequel to *Hoshi'anna*”). This suggestion means *please bring us success* and is clever given this year's *hoshi'anna*.

I want us to consider another suggestion, giving full credit to Faith Fogelman, who made the suggestion, not for Phrase of the Year but for a musical theme. Faith suggests:

- o [*The Best is Yet to Come*](#), which, as Faith with her encyclopedic memory for great popular standards says, was written by Cy Coleman and Carolyn Leigh and was popularized by Frank Sinatra. (Indeed, I'm informed that the song title is engraved on Sinatra's tombstone.)

Musical themes. When I suggested that we think about next year's musical themes, I had in mind themes similar to those we have together considered in the past: happy songs, love song, long songs, short songs, parshiot songs. Faith Fogelman had that in mind – and more. Here are what Faith starts with (as always, Faith helpfully supplies additional information on her suggestions):

- [*The Best is Yet to Come*](#), by Cy Coleman/Carolyn Leigh (1959)
- [*I'm Still Here*](#), from *Follies*, by Stephen Sondheim (1971)
- [*Stranger in Paradise*](#), from *Kismet*, by Robert Wright/George Forrest (1953)
- [*Looks Like We Made It*](#), Richard Kerr/Will Jennings (1977), here sung by Barry Manilow

Now that this has been clarified, think about this, and let's hear from you. In the meantime, enjoy Faith's songs.

Our Semiquincentennial. Two smart-uns have tried to improve on the ugly word *Semiquincentennial*. Barbara Reiss suggests *quadrимillennial*; and Dr. Meyer Solny (who doesn't miss the Solnys?) offers *Quarter Millennial*. These are both improvements, but can we do even better? I'm wondering about a shortened version of both, like *quartermill* or *quadramill* or even *quadmill*? Does anyone like any of them? Can you think of anything better?

On more important topics, like the actual topics, we are planning on devoting some attention to ***Shearith Israel and the QuadMill*** when we are at Touro Synagogue over the weekend of November 7-9, 2025. That is not the first of the events we are thinking about, but it is one that we hope you will attend and that may require more planning to do so. Remember that Magevet – Yale's glorious Jewish A Capella singing group – will be performing at Touro Synagogue on November 9 at about 230p, after Rabbi Soloveichik gives a talk at 2 pm (November 9, by the way, commemorates Kristallnacht, so there will be much to experience and contemplate that weekend). It will be great if we have many Shearith Israel congregants attend, including for Shabbat Services at Touro Synagogue led by Rabbi Soloveichik.

Photo Re-Finished. I thought we were finished with naming the names in the photograph of the Sisterhood circa 1955-60 that Abigail Gerstein Chill sent in. We have one more to add. Irving Ruderman (a Hazan for the High Holidays in his spare time!) thinks that the person on the bottom left is Mrs. Tamar de Sola Pool. I can't really believe that Abigail and Rose Edinger missed Mrs. Pool. But to the extent Irving is right, we can add one more name to the following:



Name That Parasha Tune. We are completing our collection of tunes for the first five parshiot of Sefer Devarim, consisting of **Parshiot Devarim, V'Etchanan, Ekev, Re'eh, and Shoftim** (this week's parasha). And, we are also officially now accepting suggestions for the six remaining parshiot in the Torah: **Parashiot Ki Tetze, Ki Tavo, Nitzavim, Vayelevh, Ha'azinu, and V'zot HaBeracha**. As a community, we have been nothing short of amazing in capturing in song some of the essences of the parshiot. Let's see the project through to the end.

For **Parashat Shoftim**, we saw last week that Billy Schulder had suggested:

- [*I Fought the Law and the Law Won*](#), here sung by The Crickets

I wouldn't have repeated the song (not that one, anyway) had Billy not responded to my question – isn't the title run-on, and shouldn't there be a comma after the first Law reference – that, no, he thought no comma was needed. I raise this only because it is the first time I can remember that Billy Schulder has been so DEAD WRONG! Whoever agrees with Billy, let me know. I will publish your names along with his – all of you, swinging from the same tree.

I have some suggestions for **Parashat Shoftim**. The parasha is packed with important principles, commandments, and themes: to name a few, the pursuit of justice; the impermissibility of perverting justice (as with bribes); leadership in Israel; the laws of war; cities of refuge; and even communal responsibility (the ceremony of *eglah arufah*). What kind of songs capture these riches?

I think of:

- [Where Have All the Flowers Gone](#), sung by Pete Seeger, on war [the video is of Pete Seeger himself]
- [Do You Hear the People Sing](#), from *Les Mis*, on communal responsibility

We can come up with literally dozens more. As we head into Labor Day, let's try.

Ending Avodah Zarah. No, not the practice, but the Tractate. By this time next week, we hope to be learning Tractate Horayot. This week the global Daf Yomi learning cycle is studying pages 67-73 of Tractate Avodah Zarah. In these pages, two of the interesting topics that deserve brief mention are the following:

First, beginning around page 66 the Talmud addresses the interesting issue of what happens when something mixes with a foodstuff that makes it taste much worse. The discussion began with idol worship but now really feels more like a primer on the laws of kashrut, which I am wholly incompetent to speak to. But in the Talmud itself, it turns out that there are diametrically opposed opinions in the Talmud on this topic: an opinion that if the unkosher additive really makes the resulting food much less desirable that it is therefore ok to eat or drink the mixture; and, at the opposite extreme, that the entire mess is not only disgusting (or nearly so) but *not* kosher to boot. It is here in the Talmud that we learn that a foreign ingredient less than 1/60th of the good stuff does not disqualify the resulting combination. The phrase is בְּטֵל בַּשִּׁשִּׁים, *batal b'shishim*. It is not universally applied (one point each for examples when *batal b'shishim* does *not* apply).

Second, for lawyers and lovers of the Uniform Commercial Code, note the interesting discussion on page 72a of the Tractate, which deals with the question of the enforceability of a statement by a seller that *if* I sell my property I will sell it to *you*. In general, there is a solid opinion saying that that commitment is not legally binding since there is no price term in the statement. We common law practitioners understand the concept of a promise not being binding, even between sophisticated merchants, if the crucial price term is missing. Here, however, I was a little surprised by the ruling, since in general I find the Talmud as or more sophisticated than any set of legal principles in use today that I'm aware of. My surprise is due to the fact that all the Talmud needed to do is assume that the seller meant ... I will sell it to you – *at the same price someone else offers*. The commitment would amount to a right of first refusal, which sometimes has value to both sellers (less so) and buyers (more so). Alas, our Sages had their own view.

No Books. I have a great one to discuss – but isn't it someone else's turn?

In this, our Year of Renewal, let us feel and express gratitude and pray *Hoshi'á nna, save us now*. And happy Labor Day to all.

Louis Solomon, Parnas