

September 11, 2025

Dear Shearith Israel family,

Our Year of Renewal. This past Shabbat, the entire Congregation enjoyed the bar mitzvah of Samuel Friedman, son of Zoya Raynes and Naftali Friedman, brother of Avi, and grandson of (among others) our member, Rima Raynes, whose journey and grace serve as inspirations to all of us. We are back in the Main Sanctuary for Shabbat services, and the choir will rejoin us *next* Shabbat (Nitzavim) for the [Consecration Shabbat](#) commemorating the anniversary of our Nineteenth St. Building (1860), and in time for Rosh Hashana, which seems to be approaching at the speed of sound.

Naming Names. We are nearing the end of our collective consideration of how we want to be thinking about next year. A lot of votes have already come in. Let's review where we were and are:

- **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)
 - *Year of Allegiance*
 - *Year of Unity*
 - *Year of Resilience*
 - *The Year to Remember*
- **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:
 - *Engagement*
 - *Redemption*
 - *Commitment*
 - *Steadfastness*
- **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*.
 - [The Best is Yet to Come](#)

In the list above, the judges this week added *steadfastness* — and for this we thank Ruth Lazar — and *The Year to Remember* — and for this we thank Liliane Marks. In a number of cases, explanations accompanied the votes, and in a few of those the remarks are worth having everyone enjoy:

- Laury Frieber supports **Year of Unity** with a great story and a song – always the way to the Judges' hearts:

*Ever since I watched the fascinating Billy Joel documentary on Netflix, I have had Billy Joel earworms, even though he was not necessarily on the top of my list of favorite artists before. One very interesting aspect of the program was his Jewish background -- his grandfather was a very prosperous manufacturer in Nuremberg and was later targeted quite directly by the Nazis until the family was driven out. They even lived right next to where the massive Nuremberg propaganda rallies were held. His father later joined the US Army and was present at the liberation of Dachau. He left Billy's family early, and they did not meet again until the pop star was in his twenties. I got a strong sense of the damage that the Holocaust wreaked on families. In any event, I am going to suggest his song "[Just the Way You Are](#)" in support of the theme of **Year of Unity**.*

- Aura Bijou comes to a different set of suggestions, but with a penetrating explanation – and a song as well:

*At another time in the Universe, I would think **Year of Legacy** would feel appropriate. But we are in very "eventful" times, and I am putting in my 2 cents for **Year of Engagement, Commitment, Hazlich'na** -- because without Hashem's intervention, we're all cooked.
[[Od Yoter Tov](#) is Aura's song of choice]*

- Finally, Steve Smith, who won our first naming contest over five years ago by masterfully dubbing the times we were going through then as **The Mulligan Years**, this year likes **Year of Ascent, Engagement, and Hatzlich'ana**:

In my view, these are all positive terms that connect nicely: First, the goal (ascent), followed by a strategy to achieve it (engagement), and then the humility to understand that success will require some help from above. They form a nice banner for the year.

FINALISTS, FOR FINAL VOTING:

- **Naming our Year:**
 - **Year of Engagement**
 - **Year of Ascent**
 - **Year of Allegiance**
 - **Year of Unity**
 - **Year of Resilience**
 - **The Year to Remember**
- **Word of the Year:**
 - **Engagement**
 - **Commitment**
 - **Steadfastness**

- **Phrase of the Year:**
 - **May Mercy meet Truth**
 - **Hatzlich'ana** ("the sequel to *Hoshi'anna*")

Musical Themes Explained. Andrew Druck put his finger on what has been confusing about my requests for musical themes. As a community we sing our way through the year with many different themes. I think that should continue. So rather than complicate, let's make it simple: We have the makings of a great year ahead. We have a Rabbi who was basically born to lead us and the rest of the interested universe through a year of education given his knowledge and interest in exactly the US history that animates our country's Ten-Score-Fifty. Our other clergy are surely meet for this task, as are our other Synagogue leaders. As a community, even facing challenges this coming year, we can hope that, and we can make a reality of,

- [*The Best is Yet to Come*](#), by Cy Coleman/Carolyn Leigh (1959)

Send in songs of hope, songs of confidence, songs of gratitude and thanksgiving. Send in a few words of inspiration and description of the area of life or existence that you are hoping and praying that The Best Is Yet to Come.

Our Squintennial. SM Rosenberg has immeasurably improved on semiquincentennial by shortening it to just Squintennial (and even shorter, to the Squint, for those for whom one syllable is the limit). (Faith Fogelman takes another cake by recalling that, on the occasion of our Nation's sesquicentennial in ~1926, Irving Berlin wrote one of the greatest songs ever, [Blue Skies](#), here by the incomparable Ella Fitzgerald.)

But in addition, something really interesting has happened this past week. Before last week, I was limping along with *quatermill*, or *quadramill*, or *quadmill*. Then, for last week, we showcased:

- Two-and-a-Half-Cent
- Ten-Score-Fifty
- 370 Years of Jewish Belonging in a Nation of 250

Since then, we not only got SM Rosenberg's Squintennial but two additional great ones:

- **CCL**, suggested by our Deputy Executive Director Bonnie Barest; and
- **נר, or Ner**, which in gematria equals 250. Like many ideas, two independent sources account for this brilliant one: Dr. Meyer Solny and our Executive Director Barbara Reiss. Barbara adds that *ner* means light or candle and that

250 = נר. We're like a 250-year-old נר תמיד (an eternal lamp), and we can use this anniversary to highlight the ways we have been and continue to be a beacon of light for our Congregation, the community, and the world beyond.

To me, all the new additions are great, and we can use them interchangeably, along with ten-score-fifty. Kudos to Rabbi Chalie Savenor, Dr. Meyer Solny, SM Rosenberg, Bonnie Barest, and Barbara Reiss. Look at all the zillions of references to the 250th being used out there in the velt. None has anything so imaginative, meaningful, and classy as:

- ***Squintennial***
- ***Ten-score-fifty***
- ***CCL; and***
- ***נר, or Ner***

Now Where Has Mrs. Pool Gone To? We still have nothing definitive confirming that Mrs. Tamar de Sola Pool is in the photo of the Sisterhood that Abigail Chill sent along. Jack Salomon thinks he spotted his own mother, but Rose Edinger and Annette Gourgey both say “no way.” This has gotten so challenging (and fun!) that Francine Alfandary went online, found a photo of Mrs. Pool, and figures that someone might see if a likeness appears in the group photo. Again with thanks to SM Rosenberg for adding the name labels:



Name That Parasha Tune. We are collecting songs for the six remaining parshiot in the Torah: **Parshiot Ki Tetze, Ki Tavo** (this week's parasha), **Nitzavim, Vayelekh, Ha'azinu, and V'zot HaBeracha.** Labor Day distracted some of us – but not Andrew Druck, one of our genuine master songsters. Andrew and his wife were away a couple of weeks, which gave the rest of us a fighting chance to come up with clever songs. Andrew's back!

For **Parashat Ki Tetze**, for Chapter 21 of Devarim, which is about war, its ethics, and the distances it causes, Andrew suggests:

- [War](#), as sung by Edwin Starr [*absolutely nothing!*]
- [If You Go Away](#), as sung by Frank Sinatra [oh I love this song]
- [Masters of War](#), as sung by Bob Dylan
- [Shelter from the Storm](#), as sung by Bob Dylan

On the topic of captive women, Andrew suggests:

- [Witchy Woman](#), as sung by the Eagles
- [Lyn' Eyes](#), also as sung by the Eagles
- [Train in the Distance](#), as sung by Paul Simon
- [Strangers in the Night](#), as sung by Frank Sinatra

For the rebellious son, Andrew likes:

- [Adam Raised a Cain](#), as sung by Bruce Springsteen

For *shiluach ha-kan* (or sending away the mother bird before taking the eggs or the chicks), Andrew suggests:

- [Bird on the Wire](#), as sung by Leonard Cohen

For the story in Chapter 22, verse 5, which is about cross-dressing, Andrew suggests:

- [Lola](#), as sung by the Kinks

For this week's parasha, **Parashat Ki Tavo**, the bulk of the parasha (after the beautiful passages on first fruits and tithing) relates to the choices we make in life – The Blessings and the Curses. So my suggestion is the

- Opening theme song from the TV show [The Prisoner](#) [*"I am a free man!"*]

Community in Perpetuity. I have tried to demonstrate that, in Judaism, there are not simply two modalities of relationships (between human being and human being, and between human being and The Almighty) but three (the additional one being that of creation and sustenance of a *community* through time and space) (see my emails of [10/20/22](#) and [3/30/23](#)). I call it the J-Continuum, in homage to the great Star Trek TV episode on the Q-Continuum. We see plain evidence of this thought in a vignette in this week's Talmud study.

This week, the global Daf Yomi learning cycle is studying pages 6-12 of Tractate Horayot. These pages finish Chapter 1, focused on errors of high courts, and begin Chapter 2, focused on errors of kings and high priests. These are long and interesting pages. What struck me is a discussion about whether changes in the composition of the sinner group (the Sages of the high court, for example) or the sinned group (the community that followed the errant advice) creates different rules for achieving repentance and absolution. The gemarra states:

אָמַר רַב פִּפְאָ: כִּי גָמְרִי חֲטָאת יִשְׁמְתוּ בְּעֲלִיָּהּ בְּמִיתָהּ – הֲגִי מִיָּלִי בִּיחִיד, אֲבָל לֹא בְּעָבוּר, לְפִי שְׂאִין מִיתָה בְּעָבוּר

*Rav Pappa said: When it is learned as a tradition that the fate of a sin-offering whose owners have died is to allow the animal to die without its being sacrificed, this matter applies specifically with regard to an individual who died but not with regard to a congregation, **because there is no death with regard to a congregation**; the entity of the congregation remains even when specific members die.*

This is not just homiletics. This is law. And it's not only a very modern notion; there are juridical entities such as corporations that outlast the lifespans of any manager or shareholder. It's also a profound notion as well, as more of us gather every evening to say an abbreviated selichot, listen to a short shofar call, hear a class, and ready ourselves for the great communal holiday of Rosh Hashana. When we join a community, it is a way of giving a part of ourselves that becomes part of something that will outlast us. There is nothing so deeply satisfying as knowing that we are for others, others are for us, and that we are all part of the great J-Continuum.

Fall for Books. Great thanks to Liliane Marks for recommending [The Lehman Trilogy](#). It was written by Stephano Massini in Italian and translated into English about five years ago. It remains a popular play. The story follows the Lehman brothers' immigration, rise in business and finance, and their eventual 2008 collapse.

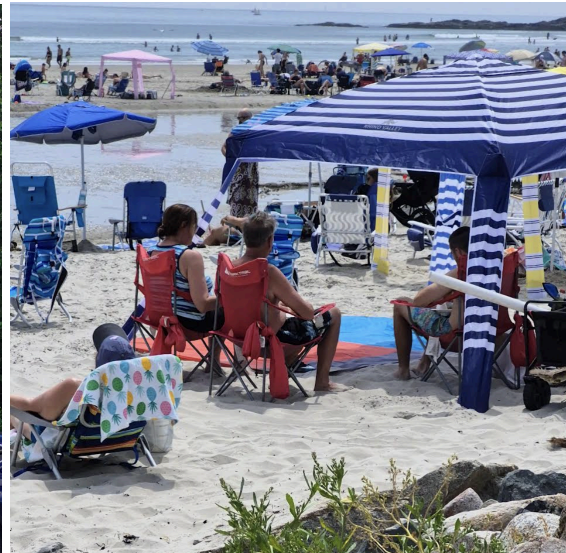
If Liliane thinks it's "excellent" (and "hilarious" in parts despite Liliane's lack of fluency in Yiddish) then it must go on the list. From its general description, it reminds me a bit of *The Money Kings*, which was great (see my email of [March 7, 2024](#) thanking Joel Schreiber for that recommendation).

Vaca Photos. I remember how much fun this was the last time we attached photos from great vacation spots; we all get to enjoy the best pics and [dream dream dream](#), as the Everly Brothers crooned.

- **Greetings from South Africa.** This year's fun started with Billy Schulder's trip to one or another magnificent park in South Africa, where no doubt he (like Toto) saw the [rains](#) as well as the wildebeests (also known as gnus if you are an Ashkenaz/Yiddish speaker from Shearith Israel). Billy has now sent in pics:



- **Greetings from Maine.** Esther Ingber sends in the following from what must have been a great trip to the near-north:



- **Greetings from Bavaria.** Barbara and Guy Reiss, trekkers extraordinaire, sent in two, one of a hike in the Bavarian Alps and one of the nearby hotel Schloss Elmau, with Barbara's interesting commentary:

Schloss Elmau is considered perhaps the most prestigious resort hotel in Germany. It's hosted the G7 twice. Hitler fancied it back in his day. But the current German owner-- a non-Jewish German -- has strong affinity for Israel. Right after October 7 he hung an Israeli flag on the main frontage of the hotel) there are no other flags there. When asked how long he will keep it up, he said until the very last hostage is returned. You can read about it [here](#) or hear him in his own words [here](#).



I'm sure many others of us (not the Solomons, but others) took great vacations this year. SEND US SOME PICS so that we can all enjoy.

In this, our Year of Renewal, let us feel and express gratitude and pray *Hoshi'á nna, save us now*. And let us not pass this day, 9/11, without observing, and grieving.

Louis Solomon, Parnas