

September 4, 2025

Dear Shearith Israel family,

Our Year of Renewal. With Labor Day in our rearview mirror for this year, we are fewer than three weeks to Rosh Hashana – as I call it, that *Day of Great Do-Over*, or the *Great Day of Do-Over*, whichever you like. Labor Day weekend did have at least one joyous occasion for all of us: the marriage of our Rabbinic Intern, Baruch-Lev Kelman, to Suzanne Behar. Mazal tob to the Kelman and Behar families, and welcome to the Shearith Israel family, Suzanne. See the pic below, including our Redoubtable Rabbi, who officiated:



Naming Names. It is also time for us to come to a consensus on our various namings for next year. We are still accepting suggestions, but we are officially declaring the final voting open. We will publish finalists next week (together with any new ones) and come to agreement the week after that.

- ***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*

Aviva Miller has two solid entries to suggest this week:

- o Year of Unity
- o Year of Resilience

In case anyone cares (I know, you don't), I love all of these.

- **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:

- o Engagement
- o Redemption
- o 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:

- o **To re-write history**, or in Hebrew **לשכתב היסטוריה** *Ishachtev historia*.
- o **May Mercy meet Truth.**
- o **Hatzlich'ana** (“the sequel to *Hoshi'anna*”). This suggestion means *please bring us success* and is clever given this year's hoshi'anna.
- o [The Best is Yet to Come](#)

Musical themes. This one continues to befuddle people, so I'm reprinting Faith Fogelman's from last week:

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

No one seems to know what I'm getting at – except Faith. It's not so hard. Really.

Our Semiquincentennial. I think it was the holiday weekend, but I received very few reactions to *quartermill*, or *quadramill*, or *quadmil*? Rabbi Charlie Savenor, who is now Executive Director of Civic Spirit (providing training and resources in civic education to day schools) , offers the following (slightly edited by yours truly):

- Two-and-a-Half-Cent
- Ten-Score-Fifty
- 370 Years of Jewish Belonging in a Nation of 250 (“a mouthful”)

I really like **Ten-Score-Fifty**. So last call to add some more or improve on any of the above (including my former favorite and now tied for first place, **Quadmill**).

Where's Mrs. Pool? I always had a hard time finding Waldo – remember that brilliant set of kids' books created by Martin Handford in the 1980s? And I can't seem to find Mrs. Tamar de Sola Pool either. Responding to Irving Ruderman's guess that the person in the bottom left of the Sisterhood photo that Abigail Chill sent was Mrs. Pool, Abigail says, well, no, she doesn't think so. Abigail did fill in another few names, so I'm reprinting the photo here, with thanks to SM Rosenberg for adding the name labels. Annette Gourgey thinks it's unlikely that Mrs. Pool would *not* have been in the photo, which is a fair inference but still isn't a substitute for an actual identification. So, we ask again, Where's Mrs. Pool? (Also don't forget to send in old photos that will keep us guessing.)



And Now Where's Billy? Not only can I not find Waldo or Mrs. Pool; I couldn't find Billy Schulder – that is, until he emailed me from Kruger National Park in South Africa! Now how cool is that? Who can top that for an end-of-summer trip? And don't forget to send in a photo showing where you were.

Name That Parasha Tune. We are collecting songs for the six remaining parshiot in the Torah: **Parshiot Ki Tetze** (this week's parasha), **Ki Tavo**, **Nitzavim**, **Vayeilekh**, **Ha'azinu**, and **V'zot HaBeracha**. Here again I think the Labor Day weekend has sent people to the pool or beach rather than to the chumash.

I have some suggestions for **Parashat Ki Tetze**. The parasha is long and powerful; indeed, as Naftali Friedman notes (he's not the first), there are more commandments in **Parashat Ki Tetze** than in any other parasha in the Torah (how many? – no cheating). Topics covered include war and the ethics of

war; family; justice and social responsibility; kindness; holiness/purity; and, lastly, memory (Amalek). We could list 100 songs easily and not scratch the surface of these topics. But I won't. I do offer:

- [Love and Marriage](#), here sung by the great Sinatra;
- [Memories](#), here by Maroon 5; and
- [We Are the World](#), here sung by you-won't-believe-the-cast.

Avodah Zarah Postscript. We ended our discussion of Tractate Avodah Zarah with a nod towards the fact that some of the last pages of the Tractate deal with topic usually learned as part of rabbinic ordination, or *smicha*. These programs are focused on *kashrut*. The Talmud discusses *Batal B'shishim*, or the rule that a non-kosher substance mixed into a kosher one would, in some general set of cases, be legally diluted if there was less than 1/60th bad to good. Claude Nadaf, wanting to clean up on a promise of points for exceptions to that well-known rule, points out several types of mixtures that are not susceptible to legal 1/60th dilution. His list (which I've edited) is simple and informative, and so I offer it as a nice primer of the types of subjects all of us non-Rabbis are missing, with nary a qualm about parting with six points for his clear elucidation:

- If the non-kosher ingredient remains separable or visible;
- Intentional mixing of the nonkosher substance;
- A whole item (like a whole bug, even if less than 1/60th);
- Solid chametz during Passover;
- Pungent liquids absorbed by a vessel; and
- Non-kosher surface spray.

Profiles in Courage. This week, the worldwide Daf Yomi learning cycle begins studying Tractate Horayot (this week through page 4). The slim tractate is three Chapters and only 14 double-sided pages long. It is as amazing as it is short; indeed, the introduction to the Schottenstein edition refers to perhaps 60 analyses written over a span of about 800 years. Generally, Tractate Horayot deals with erroneous rulings by the Sanhedrin or other Great Beit Din (like the tribunals of 23 or the supreme courts of the various tribes). Indeed, my title of this section is not about the book John F. Kennedy wrote before he was elected our 35th President (the book, by the way, won a Pulitzer). Rather, my title is about the two principles we learn in the first Mishna and first piece of gemara of this Tractate, principles that have had the strength to power civilizations and still do today.

The Mishna begins as follows:

מתקני' הורו בית דין לעבור על אחת מכל מצות האמורות בתורה, והלך היתיד ועשה שוגג על פיהם, בין שעשו ועשה עמקו, בין שעשו ועשה אחריו, בין שלא עשו ועשה – פטור, מפני שתלה בבית דין

MISHNA: If a court erroneously issued a ruling permitting the Jewish people to violate one of all the mitzvot that are stated in the Torah, and an individual proceeded and performed that transgression unwittingly on the basis of the court's ruling, then whether the judges performed the transgression and he performed it with them, or whether the judges performed the transgression and he performed it after them, or whether the judges did not perform the transgression and he performed it alone, in all

these cases the individual is exempt from bringing an offering. This is due to the fact that he associated his action with the ruling of the court.

And the first phrase in the gemara is that

גַּמְ' אָמַר שְׁמוּאֵל: לְעוֹלָם אֵין בֵּית דִּין חַיִּיבִין עַד שְׂיֵאמְרוּ לָהֶם "מוֹתְרִין אַתֶּם". רַב דִּימִי מְנַהֲרָדְעָא אָמַר: עַד שְׂיֵאמְרוּ לָהֶם "מוֹתְרִין אַתֶּם לַעֲשׂוֹת". מַאי טַעְמָא? לְפִי שְׁלָא נִגְמָרָה הוֹרָאָה

GEMARA: Shmuel says: The judges of the court are never liable to bring an offering for an erroneous ruling until they say to those seeking a ruling: It is permitted for you.

The first principle we are exposed to in the Tractate is that even great institutions make mistakes. This is a given, even for an institution as august as any of our Great Beit Din(s). The Mishna teaches that, when you err, admit the error. Step up to it. Own it. Don't make excuses. Just acknowledge the error.

The second principle we are exposed to, in the first part of the gemara, is that multiplicity of views and arguments, even decisions, are not only tolerated but welcome. Expressing dissident views is not error; and it is not punishable. As the text says, where the shoe pinches, where the offering is needed, is not for discourse or dialogue but for erroneous *conduct* – of going beyond thinking and discoursing and saying do this or that.

If you don't have the courage to admit error, then error will be compounded. And if you squelch discourse, error will be compounded there, too. It's not really a challenge to consider how profoundly important both of these principles are. They have shaped our religion for 2,000 years – and then some. It is, however, far more difficult to self-reflect on how and when we personally shy away from, or worse yet, discourage or "punish" divergent viewpoints. If we and the world would heed these messages, why we would literally [turn the world around](#), as Harry Belafonte sang.

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

Louis Solomon, Parnas