

October 17, 2025

Dear Shearith Israel family,

Our Year of Allegiance. The Fall holidays are now behind us. Our final days, Hoshana Rabba on Monday, Shmini Chag Ha'atzeret on Tuesday, and Simchat Torah on Wednesday, were wonderful days for us all. It is our prayer that the news from Israel will continue to cast as hopeful a light on the days to come as the darkness that fell on us two years ago cast a pall.

To all who made the holiday season so beautiful, our deep and abiding thanks. Mostly, those thanks go to our loyal and tireless clergy and the congregants who helped. But not entirely. Consider the story shared by our Rabbinic Intern Baruch-Lev Kelman, who tells of a young man, Chaim Lefkowitz from Monsey, who was so taken with the enormity of the task that Reverend Edinger and Rabbi Rohde must shoulder to change cloaks and Ark in our Sanctuary for and on Hoshana Rabba (from colored to white and back again in under a day) that he showed up again this year, uninvited but so welcome, to help. And that *chesed* from a nonmember!

Tonight, we begin a new season of ***Friday Night Lights***. It's the nicest, most beautiful way to move from weekday into Shabbat. I hope you will join us.

Our Hatanim Luncheon. We will be celebrating this, one of our most festive days of our congregational year, tomorrow after Shabbat morning services. We are delighted to be honoring Steve Beispel and his family (Hatan Torah) and David Adelman and his family (Hatan Bereshit). There remain financial needs that you could help satisfy. As we have asked before, please be as generous as your circumstances permit ([here](#)).

Our Trip to Touro. Don't forget to sign up for communal meals on Nov 7-8 and for the two programs set for Sunday, Nov 9 — [click here](#). This is going to be a marvelous weekend, and we hope you will join us.

What Was G-d Thinking. Beth's quip about the impossibly short time between Kippur and Succot prompted a chorus of assent. Hayyim Obadyah calls it "insane," though he wisely wonders whether, in Israel, one-day observances might "significantly change the dynamic." And Alan Zwiebel, who can't help being funny and clever at the same time, calls "Mrs. Parnas's" thought the equivalent of a "Beth-medrash."

Named That Parasha Tune, All of Them! With the completion of our Torah portions this week, we started anew with **Parashat Bereshit** on Simchat Torah. We will read the entire first parasha of the Torah tomorrow, on Shabbat. What a thrill to start again.

Last Torah cycle, we collectively launched and succeeded in ***Naming that Parasha Tune*** every week for the entire year. What a marvelous communal accomplishment. It was literally unimaginable at the start, and that we did it needs to make all of us proud of its completion. Literally dozens of congregants and friends suggested literally hundreds of songs that captured sometimes a small, sometimes a large aspect of the weekly Torah portion. In due course I will importune SM Rosenberg to create a list file and Lia Solomon to get the songs into a Spotify Shearith Israel link. For now, we should feel great that we succeeded in the largest and most popular song sharing event that we have done as a community. Congratulations to all.

Several core contributors wanted their chance to send off last year's parshiot – and we are indebted to their efforts. Jay Harwitt has his own “end” selections (which he uses to start all over again):

- [*Hit the Road Jack*](#), here sung by Ray Charles, which also celebrates (in a couple of weeks) 60 years since Jay's Bar Mitzvah
- [*We've Only Just Begun*](#), sung by the Carpenters

A personal favorite is suggested by Esther Ingber:

- [*American Pie*](#), sung by Don McLean, with the unforgettable “the day the music died”

The Encore: Name that Haftarah Tune! It is with great excitement, and some trepidation, that we announce our new challenge for the coming year: ***Name that Haftarah Tune***. Each Torah parasha has an attendant Haftarah, usually verses from the Prophets that are theme adjacent to some part of the parasha to which they are appended. The good news is that the haftarahs are typically much shorter than the Torah parshiot, say 20+/- verses as opposed to over a hundred verses per parasha (5,845 verses in the Torah, and 54 parshiot). The less good news is that most of us, especially yours truly, are much less familiar with our haftarot. So what this year's challenge will require is reading about 20 verses a week – heck even I can do that – and finding suitable themes to connect to great songs. I thought the task of naming parshiot tunes was daunting, yet we as a community did it with incredible insights, wisdom, and often great subtlety. I think we can do the same for an even more challenging task, the haftarot.

And I want to start right now. We are now collecting tunes for the **haftarot** of the first five parshiot: **Bereshit, Noah, Lech Lecha, Vayeira, and Chaya Sarah**. Send in song suggestions, and share a word or two about what the subject of the haftarah is about that you are connecting to.

To set the bar nice and low, I'll go first. The **Haftarah for Parashat Bereshit** is from Book of Isaiah Chapter 42:5-43:10. It's beautiful and expresses themes not only of the Almighty as Creator but of our task of being a light unto the nations. It also speaks of renewal (as Bereshit renewed the cycle of parshiot). So my suggestions:

- [*Born to Run*](#), here by Bruce Springsteen;
- [*Good Morning Starshine*](#), sung by Oliver; and

- [Aquarius](#), sung by the Fifth Dimension (“let the sunshine in”)

This is going to take a little work, but I can already see that this is going to be great fun for those doing the reading and the creative thinking *and* for those of us listening.

Succot-Pesah – Tu Tu. I solicited views about the connections between Pesah and Succot in addition to those that I mentioned last week, including importantly the theme that **Community Is King**. Claude Nadaf wrote a tome and included some of my points, like “inclusive joy” (which is really nice way to say it). Let me share some of his other truly excellent thoughts:

- *The two festivals bookend the Jewish year, marking the beginning and end of a spiritual and agricultural cycle.*
- *Both festivals highlight the theme of God's divine protection. The booths (sukkot) commemorate the miraculous clouds of glory that protected the Israelites during their desert journey. This parallels the protection of Jewish households during the Passover plague.*
- *Passover is sometimes seen as a celebration of the home, a secure, permanent dwelling. However, the pilgrimage ritual reminds Jewish people that even when all is well, life can shift. Sukkot, in contrast, forces a recognition of our dependence on God by having people leave their homes for a flimsy, temporary booth. It reminds us that our only true security lies in our faith, not in our physical comforts.*

The Judges are awarding Claude three points for the effort, which, if memory serves, is the largest number of points ever awarded.

Tractate Zevachim and Cutting a Little Slack. The worldwide Daf Yomi learning cycle is this week studying Tractate Zevachim pages 28-34. The pages end Chapter 2 and, at the bottom of page 31b, begin Chapter 3.

The new chapter brings a new feel, which you can sense right from the first Mishna. In the prior chapters, it felt like the Talmud focused on all that could go wrong in the bringing of a sacrificial offering. That nettlesome requirement of a good and purposeful *intent* was not the only challenge but is an ever-present one.

With the first Mishna in Chapter 3, we continue to learn about errors that invalidate a sacrifice. But for nearly each example we are also told how to correct the error and save the sacrifice. So for example,

- If one is disqualified from bringing an offering (including women), but that person ritually kills the animal (as opposed to the subsequent three acts of the sacrifice), the sacrifice is valid.

- So too in a case where the incorrect intent was used, if there is any blood left in the animal, it can be used to save the sacrifice.
- If the wrong hand is used or if another sort of disqualifying defect is evident, if the correct hand is used or there is enough after the defect to do it right, then the entire sacrifice can be saved as kosher.

One can sense that, in some of these cases, it's an intermediate step that is done wrong, and later steps are used to save the entire process. But that doesn't explain all the rules. The Mishna and subsequent pages ingeniously look for ways to be lenient not strict, to save and not to destroy, to succeed and not to fail. What a beautiful lesson.

In this, our ***Year of Allegiance***, let us couple our collective ***commitment*** with a prayer to The Almighty, ***Hatzlich'ana, help us succeed.***

Louis Solomon, Parnas