

October 23, 2025

Dear Shearith Israel family,

***Our Year of Allegiance.*** Minyan stalwart Ben Motola said it right: Even with the turmoil going on “out there,” we still managed to pull off a dignified yet festive Hatanim Luncheon last Shabbat. The Rabbi as well as Steve (Hatan Torah) and Ina Beispel and David (Hatan Bereshit) and Caroline Adelman spoke beautifully; the food was excellent; and most precious, the atmosphere was comfortable, convivial, even happy.

***Ner News.*** This Shabbat continues our season of *Friday Night Lights* after evening services and promises the first of Rabbi Soloveichik’s 10-part installments honoring our 250<sup>th</sup> Celebration following morning services. The title of this premiere “Squintennial” talk is ***The True National Treasure: A Jew’s Declaration of Independence Comes Home.*** Please join us.

And please let us know if you will join us at Newport on Nov. 7-9. Hotel rooms are filling up fast and we’d like to know if—and hope—you will be joining us for meals on Shabbat or for the programs on Sunday ([click here for full details](#)).

***Help Us Think and Plan and Execute.*** I want to cover two important items here. First, Members, please fill out the congregational survey if you received one. The survey was first deployed on September 19, and closes at midnight this Motzaei Shabbat.

Second, as a Congregation, we need to be thinking about communal projects that will honor our Congregation’s role in 250 years of participation in the United States. Several of us, including our Hatan Bereshit David Adelman along with Segan Karen Daar, Reverend Edinger, Beth Goldman, Gabe Goldstein, Rabbinic Intern Baruch-Lev Kelman, Barbara Reiss, Rabbi Soloveichik, and Warren Stern got together to think about some of the programs that you are seeing rolled out now. But there are many others to be considered. If you have any ideas, small or large, but especially activities that would involve our Congregants in a hands-on way, please let us know.

***Still Naming that Parasha Tune.*** True it is that we are trying to collect songs for the *haftarot*, not parshiot. But equally true is that we just read **Parashat Bereshit**, and it is hard not to be deeply affected by it. Gabriella Styler is reminded of [That Old Black Magic](#), and offers the following beautiful reaction to the parasha:

*Bereshit has always been my favorite Parasha out of all the five books. Each time I read/study it, it is as though **yeast** has been injected into my mind’s eye and imagination.*

*What mystical occurrence has been recorded: the creation of heavenly host above and beneath the planet that we witness each day we are blessed to rise. Snakes that walk, talk, and beguile, among*

*other things. Voices that are heard walking? Single pronoun... I. Then double pronouns ... Let us. Clothes of leaves then clothes of skin/flesh? Betrayal, jealousy, and lastly murder. All to the chagrin of the parties involved being cast out, escorted, out under arm guards, with the faint possibility of returning to a more gracious and humble state of man-kind evolution and existence.*

Gabriella, you are so right, and so poetic (and it was great seeing you at the Hatanim Luncheon). Thank you.

**Name that Haftarah Tune.** We are now collecting tunes for the **haftarot** of the first five parshiot: **Bereshit, Noah** (this week's haftarah), **Lech Lecha, Vayeira,** and **Chayei Sarah.** I would be fibbing if I told you that there has been an avalanche of immediate participation in this new challenge. But last week's email kicking off the project didn't get out until Friday because of yom tov, everyone is trying to dig out from the holidays, and I for one want to give this a few more weeks to see if people like/don't like the challenge.

I love this new challenge. It got me reading the haftarah for **Parasha Noah** with more focus and attention. Like last week's, this week's haftarah is from the prophet Isaiah, Chapter 54, from the first verse to the tenth for Sephardim and to verse 5 of Chapter 55 for Ashkenazim. The haftarah is beautiful. It evokes themes supporting consolation, renewal, and redemption after exile. The haftarah reminds us of The Almighty's promise never to destroy the world again by flood (a promise made in **Parashat Noah** itself) and includes the verse: "For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you." 54:10. So my song suggestions are:

- [\[Our\] Love Is Here To Stay](#), the great Cole Porter song performed here by the incomparable Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong:

*In time, the Rockies may crumble, Gibraltar may tumble/  
They're only made of clay/  
But our love is here to stay.*

- One of the greatest rainbow songs ever, [Rainbow High](#), from *Evita*
- And then there is the other great rainbow song, [Over The Rainbow](#), here by Judy Garland

Oh there are so many great songs for this haftarah. Any from YOU?

**Shortest Song Standoff.** Two weeks ago, we reopened our Short Song Challenge to permit entry of John Lennon's three-second [Nutopian International Anthem](#), from his 1973 album *Mind Games*. The "song" is totally silent, no lyrics, no notes, not rhythm, nada.

Claude Nadaf reasonably objects: the piece isn't a song and so shouldn't be permitted entry into a *song* contest. Instead, Claude suggests

- [The Shortest Song in the World](#) by Kenny Price

Clocking in at 18 seconds, but with sound and beat and music, should this unseat *Nupotian*? Is this entry also subject to challenge, since the entire lyrics of the song are: *This is the shortest song in the world*? Any other candidates from anyone?

**String Theory.** Esther Ingber challenges us to name the earliest R&R song using strings. I assume she does not mean songs employing a fiddle, since fiddles have been used forever. I guessed [A Summer's Song](#) as sung by Chad & Jeremy, with the masterful violin, viola, cello sounds. It's from 1964, but Esther says I'm late! Who can come up with a better answer?

**Tractate Zevachim Chapter 4.** The worldwide Daf Yomi learning cycle is this week studying pages 35-41 of Tractate Zevachim. In the past few weeks, we noticed that, in Chapters 1 and 2 of the Tractate, the focus was on the strict intent needed to carry out the sacrifices and that the failure to THINK about what we are doing leads to *piggul*, a bad state of affairs requiring the sacrifice to be redone and other potential punishments. Then we saw last week that Chapter 3 laid out some of the ameliorative principles that recognize that we are human and that even with the best of intentions we sometimes err.

Chapter 4 begins on page 36b and continues Chapter 3's efforts to avoid the worst strictures of *piggul*. We see first that the straying of intent is often about performing a sacrifice-related commandment outside its appointed time. The Talmud's focus on time is extraordinary, anticipating the Existentialists by about 2,000 years. Second behind time is space – we need to know how our conduct affects others in both time and space.

Chapter 4 introduces the concept of whether there are parts of the sacrifices that need to be done but that are not essential or indispensable to the sacrifice. So let's suppose a sacrifice has five parts. The Talmud identifies which of the parts is essential or indispensable. A straying intent or errant action with respect to one of the essential or indispensable parts disqualifies the sacrifice as *piggul*. But an error concerning one of the inessential or dispensable parts does not constitute *piggul*.

In the first Mishna in the Chapter, the example given by the House of Shammai is that, even though the sacrifice there discussed is supposed to have two sprinklings of blood on opposite sides of the altar, if you did only one, it's still ok. Or in a case where the sacrifice requires four sprinklings, doing two of them correctly is essential or indispensable and thus will save the sacrifice even though four should have been done in the right way but only two were.

The topic has much to teach us about how we approach tasks in our personal and communal lives. THINK! Be aware of what we are doing, both in time and space. But we are human – some of us *very* human – and we need a little perspective sometimes.

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