

February 26, 2026

Dear Shearith Israel family,

***Our Year of Allegiance.*** We are just days away from the Fast of Esther (next Monday) and Purim (Monday night and Tuesday). Both days are special. The Fast Day is meaningful because we focus on the personal and communal need for repair and return before the Purim festivities and because we (fairly uniquely) don tefillin at mincha in what is always a nice pre-Purim ritual. Purim itself is meaningful not just because the holiday is a joyous one but because it is made more meaningful by the important obligation of charitable giving to the poor along with sharing gifts with friends and family.

This Purim, we have a special opportunity for our younger members. Because Purim is on a Tuesday - the day of the week that our partners at Masbia distribute food at our Faith for Food Annex on Paved Paradise - Masbia is seeking volunteers to come in costume and help out from 12:30-2:00 p.m. The Purim angle may garner some media coverage, which is so helpful to this effort and Masbia's broader hunger alleviation effort. So if you or your kids are available on Purim afternoon, come for a bit in your Purim regalia and have fun doing a mitzvah.

This Shabbat is Parashat Zachor, when we are duty bound to remember never to forget to resist Amalek as the instantiation of evil directed at Jews qua Jews. You don't come to this email for Jewish law advice, but I think some have said that, if you had only one day to come on Shabbat to hear the Torah reading, this is the one. I hope we will see you. (On why we read the particular Torah portion about Amalek that we do read this Shabbat, Rabbi Soloveichik gave an excellent class on that this past Shabbat. If you missed it, ask him to repeat it.)

***A Pre-Purim Good Cry.*** We celebrate Purim with pride. Individuals, persecuted because they are Jewish, standing up and resisting. Individual Jews taking personal risks for the hoped-for good of their people. The Almighty clearly but not overtly present. Survival, endurance, resilience. J-Continuum in a world where *faith* in the Almighty's guiding hand has replaced human senses' *experiencing* of miracles.

A story told by our Reverend Edinger is not far from these thoughts. He reports that, last week, on the same day we began loudly singing verses of Megillat Esther at the end of morning services in anticipation of Purim,

*We remembered Josef Kirchheimer, born in 1931 in Niederstetten, Southern Germany. Just before the outbreak of war, Josef and his family fled to Maastricht, Holland. Tragically, they were unable to escape Europe before the German invasion. They were deported to Westerbork and later murdered in Auschwitz.*

*Josef's older brother, Julius Kirchheimer, escaped to America in 1939 and was the sole survivor of his family. In 2006, during a visit to Holland, it was discovered that Josef's wimpel — his Torah binder from infancy — had been brought by the family from Germany to Holland and kept for decades by the synagogue of Maastricht. A few years later, the wimpel was returned to Josef's niece, [our congregant] Janet R. Kirchheimer.*

*On the anniversary of Josef's birth, his wimpel was used to wrap the Torah scroll read for Rosh Hodesh Adar at Congregation Shearith Israel in New York City. Josef Kirchheimer's name has not been forgotten. His memory — and indeed his wimpel — endure, and continue to be bound with the Torah.*

עד ביאת הגואל  
(Until the coming of our Redemption)

Enjoy these photos, of the wimpel and of Janet:



**Name that Haftarah Tune.** We are now collecting tunes for the final seven parshiot of Sefer Shemot: Parshiot Mishpatim (Shekalim), Terumah, Tetzaveh (Parashat Zachor) (this week's), Ki-Tisa (Parashat Parah), Vayakel-Pekudai (read together this year) (Parashat HaHodesh).

Andrew Druck, the Harry Houdini of Haftarahs, has marvelous insights again this week. For the **Haftarah of Parashat Tetzaveh** (Ezekiel 43:10-27), Andrew notes that the haftarah describes to the Babylonian exiles the building of the future Temple in Jerusalem. Andrew says that the commentary in the J.B. Soloveitchik Chumash says it describes the third Temple, to be built by the Messiah. For these themes, Andrew suggests:

- [Ani Maamin](#), as sung by Avrohom Fried
- [Working on a Dream](#), as sung by Bruce Springsteen (great song)
- [Counting on a Miracle](#), as sung by Bruce Springsteen
- [The House I Live In](#), as sung by Frank Sinatra [this does not sound like the Chairman of the Board]
- [Home on the Range](#), as sung Gene Autry (Andrew asks if anyone under 40 who knows who that was – anyone?)
- [Mansion on the Hill](#), as sung by Bruce Springsteen

This Shabbat, instead of reading the normal haftarah for Parashat Tetzaveh, we will read the special **Haftarah for Parshat Zachor** (I Shmuel 15:1-34). This is the unforgettable haftarah where King Saul doesn't quite kill all of Amalek, disobeys the Almighty's instructions, so Shmuel finishes the job by hacking Agag, the Amalekite King, to death himself. Here Andrew makes some obvious and then some subtle suggestions:

- [No Surrender](#), as sung by Bruce Springsteen
- [Masters of War](#), as sung by Bob Dylan
- [We Shall Overcome](#), as sung by Peter, Paul, and Mary [we all know they didn't write it – nice rendition though]
- [You Cheated \(You Lied\)](#), sung by the Del Vikings (referring to Saul)
- [Remember Then](#), as sung by the Earls [just swell]
- [Remember \(Walking in the Sand\)](#), as sung by the Shangri-Las
- [Memory](#), from Cats

**Tzitzit in Menachot: A Story for the Ages.** The global Daf Yomi learning cycle is this week studying pages 42-48 of Tractate Menachot. Pages 42a-44b are full of legal debates concerning the fringes worn on four-cornered garments, or tzitzit. By page 44b we are back to Mishnaot and detailed discussions of menachot proper (if there is such a thing in the Talmud) dealing with admixtures involving grain offerings and other complex topics.

Toward the end of the treatment of tzitzit on page 44a, there is a story that begins, aptly enough, with,

*There is a story told of a man who was careful in observing the commandments concerning tzitzit.*

And what a story it is. We learn of a man, not identified by name, who prepaid an enormous sum (400 gold coins) to be able to be with a prostitute in a foreign city. He went and was greeted affectionately. When he disrobed to the point of his tzitzit, his fringes “slapped” him in the face and manifested an intention to testify against him. He therefore desisted, which intrigued the woman, who demanded to know what was wrong with her. The man told her that she was the most beautiful of women (“I swear an oath on the Temple service that you are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen”). She thereupon got his name and address, sold off virtually all her possessions (giving fully a third to the poor), went to the Rosh Yeshiva in the man's city, asked to be converted, was granted her wish (“go take

possession of your purchase”), and used the seven beds (six silver and one gold) she had prepared for illicit relations in the service of holy matrimony with the man.

The Talmud ends the tale by saying that the desserts received by the couple were their reward in this world, with unknown greater rewards in the World To Come. What a tale! In the Talmud. Right there along with detailed intricacies and complexities of law. ***The Things That Matter.***

***Siyyum HaTwain (#8, #17).*** Here is the list of the Twain works that the Shearith Israel Twain Book Club is reading (see [email of Dec. 25, 2025](#)). This week, I will summarize both *The Prince and the Pauper* (#8) and *The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg* (#17).

*The Prince and the Pauper* is a short novel about switched identities. The particular identities here, Tom Canty and Edward VI, appear to be of Twain’s own invention, though the story of switched identities seems to be as old as literature itself (Jacob/Esau?). Tom Canty starts life as a beggar, is beaten by an abusive father, but is virtuous. He switches places with the heir to the thrown in England, Edward VI, and once switched each character needs to be genuine and believable to others in his circle but still believable to the reader. Reading Twain’s treatment, I wondered if Twain wanted to test his skills as a writer to keep his characters consistent with their own narrative yet developing within their narrative in a convincing way. Twain succeeds well enough, but I have to say that this piece of fiction pales in comparison to the enormous strengths of Twain’s non-fiction works. The absence of Twain’s incomparable wit, irony, and humor ensures a bland comparison, at best.

I had the same reaction to *The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg*. The long short story is a mystery of sorts. In reality it’s a satire (but a biting one and not rye, not clever, and not funny) to demonstrate the false virtue of every inhabitant of a town that prided itself on (false) honesty and probity. As each person tries to justify entitlement to a \$40,000 reward to be given to the person who helped a stranger in years past, each is shown to be a fraud and a charlatan. It’s clever, but it wears on the reader, and the ending isn’t great (and no I’m not going to tell you).

Comparing these two works of fiction to Twain’s monumental non-fiction books like *Roughing It* (see Aura Bijou’s review of [2/5/26](#)) is obviously unfair. We have not yet heard reports on Twain’s greatest works of fiction (though *Pudd’nhead* ranks closer to the top than my two, see Warren Stern’s review of [1/8/26](#); and so does the *The Gilded Age*, see my review of [1/15/26](#)). Reviews of Twain’s reputedly greatest fiction are coming soon.

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