

April 30, 2026

Dear Shearith Israel family,

***Our Year of Allegiance.*** This past Shabbat, our Rabbinic Intern, Baruch-Lev Kelman, gave a terrific talk after morning services and an interesting class in the afternoon. The Congregation and friends should attend his talks. You will be able to say, oh I knew him when.

The Twain luncheon, featuring not only Twain scholar Professor Susan Harris but numerous congregants and Twain Book Club members, was both entertaining and educational. These moments of congregational conviviality are precious and should be sought out and experienced.

Last night being the 28<sup>th</sup> day of the Omer, by the time we meet again next Thursday we will be beyond Lag L'Omer. We will have cut our hair, shaved, and are back listening to music (assuming our custom is to observe laws of light mourning during the first part of the 49-day cycle).

***Touro Synagogue News.*** Touro Synagogue needs us, and we need Touro Synagogue. Our beloved Congregation Ahavath Israel in Newport delights at our visits, and we in turn benefit from helping to sustain this national treasure. Look at this photo of services on Hol Hamoed Pesah, where 30 people came to pray at Touro Synagogue:



There is so much going on at Touro; here are several things to plan for:

***First, Faith, Freedom, and the First Amendment: A Symposium on Religious Liberty*** will be going forward on June 8. Here is a [flyer](#). This is going to be a marvelous event. In this first year it may be briefer than longer – but quality is not best measured quantitatively.

*Second*, the Shabbatot/weekends when we are hoping that some of us will be going to Touro Synagogue as part of informal groups are:

- May 16-17
- June 20-21 (Flower Show)
- July 11-12 (Classical Music and Hall of Fame Tennis events)
- August 1-2 (Jazz Festival)
- September 5-6 (week before Rosh Hashana)
- October 17-18 (Shabbat Noah, or our Shabbat of Hope)
- November 7-8, the Shabbat closest to Kristallnacht

We are looking into suitable housing for these and hopefully other weekends. We are looking into communal meals as well. Please join us. You will have a wonderful weekend in this beautiful spot.

*Third*, for the Fall and early winter, Rabbi Soloveichik is now planning a lecture series that he will be giving to the Newport community and of course any of us who want to attend. I could see using some of the Saturday night/Sundays of the Shabbatot when we will otherwise be there. And I could see his adding other weekday lectures. The Rabbi is enthusiastic about reaching out to the community there. If you have ideas about topics/dates/etc., please let us know.

***Faith for Food.*** The April 11 edition of *The Economist* (p. 67) published a piece titled *The Price of a Miracle*. The “miracle” in the title is the virtual ending of world hunger. We start with data discussed by Prof. Steven Pinker in *Enlightenment Now* ([see my email of 1/14/21](#)), that global poverty was reduced from about 80% of the world’s population in the Nineteenth Century to about 10% by 2010-15. Strategies are available to reduce that number to one approaching zero. The economic studies discussed in the article estimate that the additional expenditures needed to accomplish this miracle would amount to less than a third of what the world spends on alcohol annually. As important, statistically significant sample survey data show that around 60% of rich-world respondents would be willing to part with the amounts needed to accomplish this miracle -- that is, if a mechanism were available to do the job.

Well, we have that mechanism for a tiny but still important part of the problem. As a community, Congregation Shearith Israel, even with the redoubtable efforts of Masbia and Doordash, cannot solve hunger around the world. But we can put a serious dent in the problem in Manhattan, where 20% of our neighbors are estimated to remain hungry or food insecure. This week again our efforts got needed food to approximately 300 people.

We are continuing to staff and financially support our community project, our Food Annex, to distribute food to our neighbors in Manhattan who need our help. But to do this we need *your* help. Please, give as generously as your circumstances permit ([here](#)).

**Magisteria Explained.** When I began on this topic, which has occupied us interestingly over the past couple of weeks, I mentioned the Stephen Jay Gould coining of the word “magisteria” to invoke two equal and nonoverlapping sets of rules. Thank you to Lester Gottesman, who educates us with the following:

*Stephen Gould's original lecture on the subject, he was trying to reconcile two opinions from Pope Pius XII and Pope John Paul II on creationism and religion. In doing so he used the word 'magisteria' from the Latin magister-- to teach - to suggest that there are separate but equal teachings which do not overlap.*

**Name that Haftarah Tune.** We are now collecting tunes for the **parshiot** comprising the back half of Sefer Vayikra: **Acharei Mot-Kedoshim, Emor** (this week's), and **Behar-Bechukotai** (also a double parasha this year to complete the Sefer).

The **Haftarah for Parashat Emor** is taken from Ezekiel 44:15-31. The haftarah summarizes the conduct of the *kohanim*, or priests, during the Temple service: what they should wear and not wear; eat and not eat; drink and not drink; look like; and then whom they can/can't marry and even which family members they can publicly mourn. The haftarah reads more like the dictates of the Torah itself, rather than a prophetic narrative. Does anyone know why?

The most prophetic-like verse in the haftarah is verse 23:

*נֹאֲתֵ-עַמִּי יִזְרוּ בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְחָלָל וּבֵין-טֵמֵא לְטָהוֹר יוֹדְעִם:*

*They [kohanim] shall declare to My people what is sacred and what is profane, and inform them what is pure and what is impure.*

Master Songsuggester Andrew Druck riffs on the sartorial requirements laid out in the haftarah and suggests:

- [Top Hat, White Tie, and Tails](#), as sung (and danced) by Fred Astaire [oh he was so great!]
- [Sisters of Mercy](#), as sung by Judy Collins

My song suggestion for this haftarah is:

- [Teach Your Children](#), here sung by Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young

**Ending Menachot.** This week, the global Daf Yomi learning cycle is studying pages 105 to 110 of Tractate Menachot, finishing that Tractate, and beginning pages 2a/b of Tractate Chulin. Those pages in Tractate Menachot are all in Chapter 13 and deal with how oaths affect meal (and other) offerings as well as some other points that the Tractate needs to clean up before ending.

It is traditional to have a festive gathering, or *siyyum*, when finishing a Tractate of the Talmud. As part of a *siyyum*, it is also traditional to learn as a group the final lines of the Tractate. For us, I think it will be more intelligible, and important, if we together learn the last Mishna of the Tractate, which is found on page 110a:

*מתני' נאמר בעולת בהמה "אשה ריח ניחוח", ובעולת עוף "אשה ריח ניחוח", ובמנחה "אשה ריח ניחוח", לומר לך: אחד המרבה ואחד הממעיט, ובלבד שיכוין לבו לשמים.*

**MISHNA:** *It is stated with regard to an animal burnt offering: "A fire offering, an aroma pleasing to the Lord" (Leviticus 1:9), and with regard to a bird burnt offering: "A fire offering, an aroma pleasing to the Lord" (Leviticus 1:17), and with regard to a meal offering: "A fire offering, an aroma pleasing to the Lord" (Leviticus 2:2). The repetitive language employed concerning all of these different offerings is to say to you that one who brings a substantial offering and one who brings a meager offering have equal merit, provided that he directs his heart toward Heaven.*

That this beautiful Mishna is intelligible seems obvious. We have learned that the three main categories of offerings – larger animals, birds, and meal – are respectively available to people of different economic means. And the Mishna is important because it ends the Tractate reminding us of the fundamental principle taught at the beginning of this Tractate and, indeed, at the beginning of the prior Tractate of Zevachim ([see my email of Sept. 26, 2025](#)). That fundamental principle is that intent (directing one's heart towards Heaven, in the words of the Mishna) is the cornerstone of *all* sacrifices. Without that intent to achieve repentance, for example, the offering is a nullity, an empty act of no interest to our religion (or to the Almighty, as it is written in our prophets umpteen times).

The teaching of this Mishna is a perfect way to end the connected Tractates of Zevachim and Menachot. We have been blessed to have been able to go through these long and challenging Tractates together.

On to Tractate Chulin. I will introduce this interesting Tractate next week.

**Knowing when to fold 'em.** We note the passing on April 16 of songwriter Don Schlitz. Among many other country/western hits, Schlitz wrote the crossover song [The Gambler](#), which Kenny Rogers turned into a near-matchless ballad.

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