

June 18, 2026

Dear Shearith Israel family,

Our Year of Allegiance. The Gala was Great! A full house enjoyed Rabbi Soloveichik's talk at the New York Historical [Society] and thereafter a delicious and convivial buffet on our Paved Paradise. We succeeded in meeting our \$300k fundraising goal. And we have all of you to thank for making the evening so festive. By the way, we won't turn you down if you still want to contribute ([here](#)), and, yes, we'll send you the beautiful keepsake booklet if you do.

Touro Synagogue Update (a positive development in a saga we wish wasn't). Last month, in the legal action that Shearith Israel was forced to bring against Touro Synagogue's former tenant, the Court agreed with us that the historic Jewish cemetery in Newport (of Longfellow fame) belonged to Shearith Israel since it was appurtenant to the Touro Synagogue, which the Court also reaffirmed was owned by Shearith Israel. As Jim Herstoff and Paul Tobak, leaders of our sister Congregation Ahavath Israel (CAI) in Newport, reported to their members in beautiful words:

Shearith Israel and the CAI board are gratified that the Court, in a strong opinion, determined that the colonial cemetery is connected to and is appurtenant to the Synagogue. It is now under CAI's local control on behalf of Shearith Israel. We accept this responsibility with humility, and we are already developing plans for its care.

In other Touro news, the informal program of having Shearith Israelites go to Touro Synagogue for Shabbatot is working well. Several of us have already gone. More of us have plans to go over the summer and into the fall. The weather in Newport this time of year is gorgeous. Shabbat at Touro Synagogue is beautiful. Do make plans to go, share communal meals, and even see if there are housing accommodations for you (check with Barbara Reiss).

We want you.



Last week, I summarized a number of initiatives we hope to try in order to invigorate our Congregation from within and without. Here they are in even briefer summary:

- Synagogue security is among our highest priorities. Get trained, and then help on Shabbat and holidays.
- Work with the League and Sisterhood to be a greeter to welcome newcomers and visitors on Shabbat and holidays.
- Help us implement a peer-to-peer outreach program for nahalot and birthdays.
- Spend a Shabbat or two at Touro Synagogue in Newport.
- Join us for more learning with Rabbi Soloveichik after Shabbat services.
- Join us to hear eminent Scholars in Residence throughout the year.
- Join us for Shabbat services, when we intend to have the choir with us virtually every Shabbat from the Shabbat before Rosh Hashana through Shavuot.
- Join us for an increasing the number of Shabbat community meals, and when we experiment with extending Friday Night Lights beyond Pesah.

I didn't get as many kudos on our original poster as I thought we would. Still, we already have received some excellent feedback on our list. Faith Fogelman feels we need some *Blue Ocean Strategy* ideas. Faith explains that the concept comes from books by Kim & Mauborgne and relates to identifying and promoting something special about affiliating with Shearith Israel. Faith recommends organizing mini-groups of congregants to share ideas for synagogue growth. I think it's a wonderful idea; as Faith says, it will help "more people to take ownership."

Hayyim Obadyah also had a great idea related to another of our initiatives, and that is to publish, perhaps in the Congregational Thursday email, the names of the rabbinic nahalot coming up. It is true that few of us miss our own family's nahalot, but wouldn't it bring us together a little more to know about others', too? It also might help weekday minyan attendance. We might ask Rev Edinger to announce in English the nahalot that we say during Torah reading on Shabbat. Otherwise, most of the rest of us do not always know who is being remembered. I have favored this for many years. Is it time to make an experiment of it? Comments welcome.

Name that Haftarah Tune. We are now collecting tunes for the haftarot for the parshiot comprising the first half of **Sefer Bemidbar: Parshiot Bemidbar**, a pause for **Shavuot, Nasso, Behaalotcha, Shelach, and Korach** (this week's).

And we are opening the lines for the haftarot for the remaining parshiot in **Sefer Bemidbar: Parshiot Chukat-Balak** (another double parasha), **Pinchas**, and **Matot-Massei** (and another double parasha).

This week's **Haftarah for Parashat Korach** is taken from 1 Samuel 11:14–12:22. The Jewish people want a king. The prophet Samuel wishes they didn't but understands human foibles. In the end, the haftarah is about putting our faith in the Almighty.

Ritual Director Jay Harwitt suggests:

- [*If I Were King of the Forest*](#), from *The Wizard of Oz*

MSS Andrew Druck:

- [Song of the King](#), from *The King and I*
- [It's Good to be King](#), as sung by Tom Petty
- [King Creole](#), as sung by Elvis Presley
- [Court of the Crimson King](#), as sung by King Crimson

My suggestion here is

- [I Wonder What the King Is Doing Tonight](#), the great song from *Camelot*

Terayfot In Tractate Chulin. The global Daf Yomi learning cycle is this week studying pages 45-51 of Tractate Chulin. This third chapter in the Tractate is long and extends to the bottom of page 67b. So let's pace ourselves and get the most out of it.

For this week, I wanted to observe two things, the first a tribute to the insights of our congregants and friends:

First, last week, I asked for some thought about why the Talmud seemed to be so focused on jamming terayfot into 18 categories (though the Talmud also uses an alternative taxonomy including eight). Two of the responses received on this are insightful. Aura Bijou shares such a nice approach:

It can't be a coincidence that the number is 18 defects for terayfot, and that one who sees/hates his own defects shall live. There is also the precept of V'chai bahem [from the Torah verse, "and you shall live by them"]. It would seem that 18 rules about defects in animals would be enough to help us stay pure without being onerous (and G-d forbid say the heck with it!), and allow us to live in humility but still be able to enjoy dinner!

Claude Nadaf, who corrects my error last week (Chapter 3 begins on 42 not 41, apologies), more interestingly finds in the number 18, like Aura, a similar "nod to the *hai* in *vahai bahem*" in Varyikra ch. 20. Claude also believes that:

The number 18 is most famously associated with the 18 decrees established by the strict School of Shammai (Beit Shammai). These were specific restrictions designed to create a boundary between Jewish communities and the surrounding non-Jewish population (such as the prohibition against gentile-made wine, yayin stam).

For the categorization of eight, Claude gets a little spooky, believing that Ulla, the Sage who brings us the number eight, was

privy to Number Symbolism in the Torah, and that he states that all specific laws given to Moses at Sinai regarding terayfot can actually be distilled into 8 general conceptual categories is a nod to the prophetic subtextual message of association of number 8 and its multiples to the G-d Israel covenant.

Second, recall that I wondered why it seemed that the Talmud in this area was saying that the normal rules of inference beyond the 18/8 were not used to invalidate ritually slaughtered foods. That turns

out to be accurate. Indeed, on page 48b, the Talmud explicitly says that one can't reason from analogy in this area of terayfot, certainly not to invalidate new types of defects:

אין אומרים בטראפוט זו דומה לזו

That should clear this up. And it seems very interesting that our Sages did not want to pile on more and more types of disqualifying defects to make it harder on Jews to keep kosher, as Aura says above. What an important take-away.

Siyyum HaTwain (#13). Here is the list of the Twain works that the Shearith Israel Twain Book Club has read ([see email of Dec. 25, 2025](#)).

This week we finish our Book Club's Squintennial celebration of Mark Twain by discussing *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (#13 on our list). Oh it's a wonderful book. Even Twain, in an introduction, hopes that grown-ups and not just adolescents will enjoy the book. The book follows Tom Sawyer, with not inconsiderable appearances of Huck Finn. The story is diverting. Tom begins as a prankster and ends demonstrating a moral compass. So does Huck. The language and vernacular of this short novel are extraordinary. Especially in its original form (a word offensive to the sensibilities of Professor Alan Gribben, who died last week, was excised from the novel in this Century to help get the book back into High School curricula) the book is a must read. Period.

With this last summary we should thank all the reviewers and all the readers of the reviews. Deep thanks to reviewer Michael Schulder, who led the way in most books reviewed, as well as Francine Alfandary, Aura Bijou, Faith Fogelman, Naftali Friedman, Baruch-Lev Kelman, Rima Raynes, Diane Sandoval, Billy Schulder, Warren Stern, and Madelene Towne. Thanks again to our Twain scholar, Dr. Susan Harris, who was such a treat at our Twain luncheon held in May. This was a fitting Squintennial effort to celebrate America's greatest humorist and certainly one of the Nineteenth Century's best American writers.

We are going to take a short break from book club duties and focus on other books this summer. BUT several of us are already thinking about our next congregational book club adventure. If you have any ideas, send them along. In all events, let's keep sharing thoughts about good and bad reads.

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