

June 25, 2026

Dear Shearith Israel family,

Our Year of Allegiance. We are headed toward July 4 and the Tall Ships to celebrate our Squintennial, but to me it seems we got the right jump on the celebration this year. That's not to say the current programming isn't interesting. NPR just this week ran a segment on *All Things Considered* called [Soaked Into the Wood: A Visit to the Birthplace of Religious Liberty](#). The piece features several houses of worship in Rhode Island including our Touro Synagogue. Our partner at Touro Synagogue, Cong. Ahavath Israel, had both Jim Herstoff and Aaron Ginsburg speak during the segment. Both are terrific.

Taking a Trip To Touro. Beth and I spent this past Shabbat at Touro Synagogue. It was wonderful. Services were a treat. There were about 30 of us Shabbat morning, which made davening and kiddush afterwards really joyous. The minhag there is not ours, but it was nice nonetheless. And the fact that the prayer tunes are, shall we say, eclectic, means that congregants and visitors alike can find a tune that someone knows and others can enjoy.

While in Newport, we stayed in the roomy attic space (with its own bathroom) in the apartment we have rented to house R' Gershon Klapper and, depending on the Shabbat, one or two other people/families/couples. People were visiting from New Jersey, Connecticut, Cleveland, and Long Island, and there were nearly a dozen under-30s.

The apartment is a five-minute walk from the Synagogue and has a large dining/living area where R' Klapper hosted communal meals for about two dozen visitors and locals. The mood – oh what the heck, the vibe – was one of cheery fellowship. It was like Shabbatot spent in non-US cities where locals and visitors mix and match in great conviviality. It was just splendid. And our Shabbat afternoon walk was in the gorgeous sunshine seeing gorgeous old mansions and the gorgeous ocean's Cliff Walk.

There is time yet this summer to enjoy this very special place. Do it. You will not regret it. To inquire, including how to contribute in exchange for hospitality, contact Melissa at touro@shearithisrael.org.

We want you.



Here is a list of the initiatives that we want YOU to lean in to:

- 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.
- Share your ideas for youth programming with our Youth Directors, Dalya & Jake Frankel.
- Encourage Young Professionals to sign up for our Young Professionals WhatsApp group and participate in our YP programs led by Sharon Rosenblum and Alexander Haberman
- 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 Shabuot.
- Join us for what we hope will be an increasing number of Shabbat community meals, and when we experiment with extending Friday Night Lights beyond Pesah.

Following up on Hayyim Obadyah's idea of announcing rabbinic *nahalot*, Sarah Gross, our Office Manager and Financial Associate, also likes the idea and advises that Sunday of this week was the *nahala* of Rev. Gershom Mendes Seixas, who as everyone knows was our Minister during the Revolutionary War.

Mona Klaber wants to expand this good idea even more. Says Mona:

I think the idea of announcing the nahalot from the tebah (ie "this week we remember Donald Stein, father of Mona Klaber, grandfather of Andrew Klaber") ... I have found that it can even help foster conversation at the kiddish -- someone saying some kind words to another congregant whose loved one was publicly remembered.

I also think it's important to have greeters on Shabbat and holidays; everyone likes to feel welcome, especially newcomers.

We have a nice size group favoring these initiatives. Now it's down to us to implement.

On Faith Fogelman's idea of scheduling some time to dialogue *Blue Ocean* strategies, Faith is willing to take ownership of at least some of the project. If you have some time in August to meet and discuss, please email the office. I love the very thought of *Blue Ocean*.

Carol Goldberg offers three other ideas that deserve consideration:

- Rabbi Soloveichik's "lectures are extraordinary, and I think would be well received if he put them on YouTube"
- "It [YouTube] would also be a good venue for the choir -- a distinctly powerful and unique musical sound"
- "Also, some early New York Jewish history including a walk through the city's CSI cemeteries."

What about the other initiatives? Who's got what to say about those?

Name that Haftarah Tune. We are now collecting tunes for the haftarot read for the remaining parshiot in **Sefer Bemidbar: Parshiot Chukat-Balak** (a double parasha this week), **Pinchas**, and **Matot-Massei** (and another double parasha).

The **Haftarah for Parshiot Chukat-Balak** is the haftarah read for Parashat Balak, taken from Micah 5:6-6:8. The repeated reference to the "remnant of Jacob" cannot but remind us of our own Congregation, the Remnant of Israel. And the last verse is both sublime and eternal:

הַגִּיד לְךָ אָדָם מֵה־טוֹב וּמֵה־יְהוָה דּוֹרֵשׁ מִמֶּךָ כִּי אִם־עֲשׂוֹת מִשְׁפָּט נִאְהַבְתָּ הֶסֶד וְהִצַּנַּע לָכֵת עִם־אֱלֹהֶיךָ

You have been told, O mortal, what is good, and what the Almighty requires of you: Only to do justice, And to love goodness, And to walk humbly with your God.

Ritual Director Jay Harwitt has a great suggestion. He feels we need an answer to the charges levelled by Micha in Chapter 6. For that he suggests:

- *A Din-Toyre mit G-tt*, also known as *The Prayer of Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev*. I have searched, can find endless talks *about* the song, but can't find the song. Can anyone send in a link?

Jay also has another suggestion, but I'm not sure it's for either haftarah of this week's double parasha. It is, however, a great song:

- [*Jeremiah Was A Bullfrog \(Joy to the World\)*](#), by Three Dog Night

MSS Andrew Druck describes this week's haftarah as "tough". I found that, too, which is why I am calling on all of you to help finish this project, read the haftarah a few days early, and send in some song suggestions. Of course, when Andrew thinks a haftarah is tough, that means he has only *five* creative suggestions. Noting (independently from me) the opening verse's reference to "the remnant of Yakov" found in exile, Andrew suggests:

- [*I Remember You*](#), as sung by Nat King Cole
- [*My Love Will Not Let You Down*](#), as sung by Bruce Springsteen [super song; super video]
- [*Ramblin' Man*](#), as sung by the Allman Brothers Band
- [*Travelin' Man*](#), as sung by Ricky Nelson

Andrew also notes the final verse, where the Almighty "speaks of what Hashem asks of the Jews". Here Andrew suggests:

- [*Be True*](#), as sung by Bruce Springsteen

Tractate Chulin and the Absence of an Undistributed Middle. I mentioned last week that reasons being given for the 18 or eight categories of *terayfot* were getting a little spooky. I knew I was going to trigger Claude Nadaf by using that word. But Claude doesn't get angry; he gets even smarter, telling me off thusly:

There is nothing spooky or mystical about subtextual Number Symbolism in the Torah as it is as much part as the surface narrative of the holy prophetic literature embedded throughout without tilting the surface meaning miraculously. Those patterns were intentionally placed by a supreme being in the first nine books of Tanakh as well as Psalms.

This week, the global Daf Yomi learning cycle is studying pages 52-58 of Tractate Chulin. On page 54a we (finally) get to the second Mishna in the long Third Chapter. It is the mirror image of the first Mishna; if the first Mishna tells us those defects or wounds that disqualify an animal or fowl, the second tells us which do not. For example, a missing part of the windpipe or a crushed or fractured skull will not disqualify an otherwise kosher animal.

What is fascinating about the discussion is that there doesn't seem to be an undistributed middle between the two sets of categories, that is, between those categories that disqualify and those categories that don't. In the listings, the Talmud is trying to advise what defects to avoid but which defects need not be avoided. This is akin to the point I have made two weeks running already. The Talmud here, uncharacteristically, is not encouraging logical extensions that would have the effect of widening the hardship of keeping kosher. By the same token, the second Mishna doesn't admit of much broadening either. If a defect is insufficient to render a food unkosher, don't expect an analogous defect to be similarly all right.

Post-Twain Books of Summer. Having finished last week our collective reading of Twain, I wanted to spend a minute on an entirely different book – but one just as fitting for a read during our Squintennial. Professor Linford D. Fisher teaches history at Brown. He testified on behalf of Shearith Israel in the first, major trial involving Touro Synagogue in the mid-teens.

Since about that time, Prof. Fisher has been working on an opus just published titled [*Stealing America: The Hidden Story of Indigenous Slavery in US History*](#). The title gives away the thesis, and Professor Fisher has written a thorough but readable, serious study of Native American slavery. His data are persuasive that the magnitude exceeded Black slavery in the US. Yet most of us know nothing about it. To be sure, the story is a complicated one; Indian slavery was frequently the result of Indian vs Indian wars and battles. But Prof. Fisher again seems persuasive in adjusting for that. The result is that he has added an important dimension of our historical understanding of this great Nation, one they don't teach in American History courses.

Stealing America is not a fun book. But it is an important one, and it's a must read.

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