

Dear Shearith Israel family,

Our CommUNITY

Our Year of Allegiance. We are in the Nine Days preceding Tisha B'Av. Rosh Hodesh Av was yesterday. It's one of only two Rosh Hodeshes that we announce only briefly at Shabbat services, without the beautiful preambulatory verses that we recite the rest of the year. The tunes for our prayers are also now distinctly doleful – and will be until Tisha B'Av. (How remarkable, by the way, that the melodies for our kinot on Tisha B'Av are really quite melodic and beautiful. We need to get Rabbi Rohde to explain their origins.)

I've been looking for some proof that our special Three Weeks haftarot are as old as the general setting of haftarot. It stands to reason, since how could it otherwise be that, for example, our week two of the Three Weeks haftarot is the same as that read for Parashat Massei, which is the parasha typically read now. I've gotten very little help on that one.

And, if you think that's a hard question, Rabbi Soloveichik staked out an even more ambitious agenda at his class on Shabbat afternoon (the first of three lectures with Tisha B'Av themes): to show how the Torah portions themselves, not just the much later haftarot, read this time of year are redolent of the same themes as we consider during the Three Weeks and on Tisha B'Av. The first lecture was excellent. Try to attend the others ([dates here](#)).

I Love You, Man! We all remember the Bud Light commercial from the 90s. I too personally feel that the expressions of concern from so many of you to my trying-to-be-subtle report of my July 4th at Weill Cornell were deeply touching.

We are a wonderful and caring community. We don't have to be the *most* wonderful and caring community. The only metric that gets one to the "most" is untestable opinion. But we are a wonderful and caring community. We each have our own idiosyncrasies. They should be seen as endearments. In the main, each of us chooses to belong, and it is that choice that leads to the feeling and the reality of a community.

It is often said that Congregation Shearith Israel isn't for *everyone*. Maybe so. But it is for *anyone* – anyone who wants to belong will find a spiritual and emotional home. Anyone.

We want you.



That's not to say our commUNITY can't do better at the UNITY part. Of course we can. And should. And will. That's why we display SM Rosenberg's clever poster. That's why we have been listing initiatives that, while filling up fast with volunteers, still have some room left in them for YOU to lean into.

In case you don't have them committed to memory, yet, here is a list of the initiatives for the coming year:

- Synagogue security is among our highest priorities. Get trained, and then help on Shabbat and holidays.
- Be a greeter to welcome newcomers and visitors on Shabbat and holidays.
- Help Share your ideas for youth programming with our Youth Directors, Dalya & Jake Frankel, with youth programming.
- Help Sharon Rosenblum and Alexander Haberman with the Young Professionals programming they are so hard at work at. The great success of this past Shabbat's gala – 120 young professionals enjoyed a Friday night meal on Paved Paradise – speaks both to the importance of the challenge of engaging new members and in the talents of the people running the program. Let's help them any way we can.
- 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.

Looking at the list, it's a good list – maybe even a very good list. To make it a great list, what would you add? Put another way, what would YOU add?

Name that Haftarah Tune. Another milestone achieved. Last Shabbat, we completed Sefer Bemidar, and this Shabbat we embark on the last of our annual five-legged journey. We are collecting tunes for the haftarot in roughly the first half of Sefer Devarim: **Devarim, Va'etchanan, Eikev, Re'eh, and Shoftim.**

This week is the last of the *Telata De'puranuta*, or the three “haftarot of punishment” that precede Tisha B'Av. The parasha is Devarim, and the haftarah, like Shabbat itself, is known as *chazon*, or vision, for the first word of the haftarah. This is the great commencement of the Book of Isaiah, and the haftarah is taken from the first 27 verses of the Book. The words of the prophet resound to this day: *Stop bringing meaningless offerings; they are offerings of abomination to Me* (verse 13). Sin begets punishment, banishment, tragedy. But with repentance the city that has become a prostitute will be the faithful city, one of righteousness.

MSS Andrew Druck is not to be deterred by the barbell-like quality of the haftarah. At one extreme, Andrew suggests (way too much Dylan, I know, but Andrew likes Dylan, and we like Andrew):

- [*Desolation Row*](#), as sung by Bob Dylan
- [*Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands*](#), as sung by Bob Dylan

- [Too Much of Nothing](#), as sung by Bob Dylan
- [Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues](#), as sung by Bob Dylan
- [Tangled up in Blue](#), as sung Bob Dylan
- [Blues in the Night](#), as sung by Frank Sinatra
- [Where Have All the Flowers Gone](#), as sung by Pete Seeger
- [Sunday Morning Comin' Down](#), as sung by Kris Kristofferson
- [The End](#), as sung by the Doors

At the other extreme, after Israel does repent, Andrew suggests:

- [A Change Is Gonna Come](#), as sung by Sam Cooke
- [Eli's Coming](#), as sung by Laura Nyro ("Elijah accompanies the Messiah")
- [The Rising](#), as sung by Bruce Springsteen
- [Hold On, I'm Comin'](#), as sung by Sam and Dave

My song suggestions for this powerful haftarah of commUNITY include:

- [Masters of War](#), here by Bob Dylan
- [My Little Town](#), here by Simon & Garfunkel ("nothing but the dead and dying back in my little town")

CommUNITY in Tractate Chulin: Oto V'Et B'no. The global Daf Yomi learning cycle is this week studying pages 73-79 of Tractate Chulin. With page 78a we begin Chapter Five of the Tractate. The Chapter's name, as usual, is the first several words of the first Mishna in the Chapter, *Oto v'et b'no*, or *it and its offspring*.

This brief issue is profoundly important to the commUNITY theme of this email. The story begins in Sefer Vayikra 22:28. That verse states:

וְשׂוֹר אוֹ-יָשָׁה אֹתוֹ וְאֶת-בְּנוֹ לֹא תִשְׁחָטוּ בְיוֹם אֶחָד

However, no animal from the herd or from the flock shall be slaughtered on the same day with its young.

The verse strikes us expressing kindness, perhaps akin to the mitzvah of sending away the adult bird before taking the eggs. Ok, that's nice, but is there something more going on here? I think there has to be given the particulars of the mitzvah, and I credit the brilliant Rabbi Shalom Rosner (who I think was quoting someone else) for the kernel here.

As the commentary to the Schottenstein edition puts it: "It is not necessary for one person to slaughter both the parent [most think it's the mother] and the offspring". Indeed, it is entirely possible that the offspring will be in a completely different place from the parent. And it is not evident that the person doing the ritual slaughter will even know where the other part of the parent-offspring pair is.

So now this becomes interesting. In order for Jews to honor this mitzvah, they need to know where the parents are (or where the mother is, if that's the rule) and where the offspring are. And there needs to

be communication *and* cooperation so that the ritual slaughter of both does not occur on the same day. This is a serious, Biblical command, and it has commUNITY written all over it.

We are *arevim* or responsible for each other. It matters when we don't show up for services. Sure, we are a New York congregation; we like to give space to our fellow congregants. Can't be too nose-y, I know. But in another sense, we *can't* be too nose-y – meaning there is no such thing as being too nose-y. Make sure our fellow congregants know they are missed. And help build our commUNITY.

Our Next Book Project: More CommUNITY. We are zeroing in on a general topic for our next book club undertaking. Jewish characters from between the Wars by American authors is ahead of Kafka. Michael Schulder conveys a way to think about it:

It's still the USA squintennial year — shouldn't we be reading American writers, and yes, Jewish ones, no apologies needed. P. Roth (great at his best), Bellow, Malamud (never read the last 2), maybe H. Roth.

Without agreeing to Michael's precise list (not that it's a bad one), I think we will declare the winner and now turn to the fun if challenging task of choosing titles. This started as Madelene Towne's idea, and she now has all the reactions and a bunch of recommendations, including to broaden the time-period somewhat. Let's ask her to come up with a book list that we can all comment on. Send in whatever suggestions you have.

My hope for this coming year is that whoever wishes to join this highly selective and exclusive group – meaning anyone who is willing to do the reading is welcome to join – can meet once a month/two to discuss. Michael Schulder thinks a Friday night dinner gathering would be most convenient. I love the idea, but let's hear from you on that. In the meantime, if you want to be on the super-exclusive e-mail list as we proceed, and if you haven't already raised your hand, email us now.

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