

July 2, 2026

Dear Shearith Israel family,

Our Year of Allegiance. Today being the 17th of Tamuz, many of us are fasting, and all of us are embarking on the three-week observances that lead up to Tisha B'Av ([see email of July 10, 2025](#)). Well over the fast, to all.

It remains an oddity that, in summing up America even today, so many of us still quote the French visitor de Tocqueville's observations of about 200 years ago:

Never have a people been blessed with such happy, dynamic conditions of existence

Despite the distractions of politics – distractions that de Tocqueville himself describes *as such* and minimizes when he portrays the true American condition – we Shearith Israelites have so much to be thankful for: a land where Jews, considering the arc of history, have never been as safe, a place where our devotions and ministrations have had such a profound and positive influence. A place where our own Rabbi Soloveichik can be seen pictured at the White House (last Friday), talking to the President of the United States about American Jewry and the Religious Liberty Commission that our Rabbi was a member of. America the Miraculous. Happy 250th to all.

This Shabbat, July 4, we will be celebrating our Squintennial as a congregation. Rabbi Soloveichik is planning an important talk/presentation, which will be followed by a festive Shabbat lunch open to all. I hope we will be through in time to hoof it over to the Hudson River piers and gape at the Tall Ships. So, it's going to be hot; wear a large brim hat and, assuming your eruv observance permits, bring water. Shabbat will be over in time to watch some of the fireworks.

Festivities will not stop on the 4th. On July 7, for example, Touro Synagogue will join other historic Newport houses of worship by opening to the public in celebration of religious freedom (join our Touro Facebook page and learn more [here](#)). In Newport, this is a major inter-faith, community event. Thank you to our partner, Congregation Ahavath Israel, for organizing, hosting, etc.

Turning the Corner. The solstice this year was on June 21, but measuring total daylight hours isn't as telling for us this time of year as measuring just sunset. Sunset last Shabbat was 8:31p. Sunset tomorrow and Saturday nights is a full minute earlier. It's direction not speed that counts this time of year, certainly for those of us (like me) who gripe about Shabbat ending so late.

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

And we are opening the lines for song suggestions for the haftarot in roughly the first half of Sefer Devarim: **Devarim, Va'etchanan, Eikev, Re'eh, and Shoftim.**

There has been some excellent follow-up to our discussion last week related to the haftarah from Micah. **First**, I couldn't find a link to *A Din-Toyre mit G-tt*, also known as *The Prayer of Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev*. Thank you to Jay Harwitt and Paul Slater for [this](#). The Paul Robeson version is marvelous.

Second, Claude Nadaf focuses on the sublime last sentence of last week's haftarah – we quoted it last week:

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 G-d.

Claude reminds us of the passage from the Talmud, Tractate Makot (page 24a), which Claude explains "surveys prophetic portrayals of the essence of the Torah":

David came and reduced [that essence] to eleven principles (see Psalm 15), ... Isaiah came and reduced them to six (see Isaiah 33:15:16) ... Micah came and reduced them to three (see Micah 6:8

Says Claude, beautifully:

There is something very powerful about the Talmud's statement, that the essence of the Torah and all its commandments can be thought of as Micah's 'do justice and love goodness, and walk modestly with your G-d.' These principles serve as guideposts for the validity of all religious behavior.

The **Haftarah for Parashat Pinchas** is the first of three haftarot that precede Tisha B'Av. They are called Telata De'puranuta, or the three [haftarot] of punishment, though each end with words of consolation and indeed hope. After Tisha B'Av, we are treated to seven of the most uplifting haftarot (of Isaiah) of the entire year.

The Haftarah for Parashat Pinchas is taken from the Book of Jeremiah (1:1–2:3). Wickedness will beget destruction, plain and simple. Yet at the end, the text acknowledges, in among the most beautiful passages of Tanach, that Israel followed the Almighty in the wilderness as a bride, in a land not sown.

For these by turns harrowing and beautiful thoughts, MSS Andrew Druck suggests:

- [A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall](#), as sung by Bob Dylan
- [Eve of Destruction](#), as sung by Barry McGuire
- [You're No Good](#), as sung by Linda Ronstadt
- [You Ain't Going Nowhere](#), as sung by Bob Dylan
- [Those Were the Days](#), here sung by Mary Hopkin

My suggestion runs to the final, optimistic verse of the haftarah:

- [I Will Follow You](#), here by Ricky Nelson
- [Follow You, Follow Me](#), here sung by Genesis (the refrain is among my favorites)

Can I Order A Bowl of Grasshoppers, Please. The global Daf Yomi learning cycle is this week studying pages 59-65 of Tractate Chulin. Page 59a begins what in substance is the second half of the Third Chapter of the Tractate. The scene shift is logical, flowing from the discussion before, but still quite new.

The Mishna on page 59a presents the categories of animals that are kosher and, in brief, how we know it. Thus, between the luminously clear Mishna and the gemarra that follows we learn:

- There are five categories of animals that are kosher: domesticated animals; undomesticated animals; fowl; grasshoppers; and fish.
- Signs of being a kosher species are listed in the Torah for domesticated animals, undomesticated animals, and fish. An incomplete list includes split hooves, cud chewing, lack of incisors for non-fish; fins and scales for fish.
- But the Mishna records that the Bible does not prescribe signs for fowl and grasshoppers. An incomplete list that the Mishna provides for fowl includes that clawing prey is unkosher, while an extra foot digit, a crop, and a peelable gizzard are kosher. For grasshoppers, the kosher signs, which need to be seen based on a tradition, include having four legs, four wings, two additional jumping legs, and whose wings cover most of its body.
- For fish and grasshoppers, there are no expressed means of ritual slaughter; they are kosher when collected or batched up with other fish or grasshoppers, respectively.
- We also learn that for many species of fowl and grasshopper, their being kosher arises from a tradition (called *g'miri*, not *mesorah*) of being kosher. Hence the challenge 400 years ago in America as to whether the turkey was a kosher bird.

Why do I like this part of the Chapter? I think it's because it is all so clearly laid out – and so clearly applicable to us, today. The Schottenstein Talmud edition I use also has extraordinarily detailed pictures and drawings – but each has BIG BOLD lettering disallowing any reproduction. So much for sharing knowledge and fair use.

Books. Michael Schulder sends in a [podcast link](#), to a dialogue with Prof. Jonathan Sarna about his forthcoming book on R' Gershom Seixas, whom we spoke about last week. We have resident scholars and indeed experts on our former Rabbi – the Rabbi of the Revolution – so on this one I'm hoping someone else will read this one first. Prof. Sarna, who participated in a related Symposium we hosted in our Sanctuary back in 2012 along with Rabbi Soloveichik, and our friend Louise Mirrer, of The NY Historical, is renowned in this field as well.

Our Next Book Club Project. I'm still hoping to wait till the Fall to get started on our next group list. But already we have two very different proposals, so let me summarize them. Please consider which of these you would prefer to lean into – or whether there are others that you think would interest many of us.

Madelene Towne has a terrific project in mind: American writers between the wars that involve some Jewish character. Aura Bijou also has an interesting project, one Barbara Reiss likes, too: Kafka. Which would you want to take a book and read and briefly report on? Which would you like to discuss over a nice dinner or lunch with other equally well-read and intelligent congregants? Vote 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