

July 22, 2026

Dear Shearith Israel family,

Our Year of Allegiance. Tisha B'Av begins tonight. I trust we will have a full house to sit in darkness, listen to the chanting of Eicha, and listen to Rabbi Soloveichik's final talk in his Tisha B'Av series.

Tomorrow, however, is when the full power of the day and of our service can be felt. I have quoted before the description that Reverend Stiles gave of the Tisha B'Av service held at Touro Synagogue (then called Newport Synagogue) some 250 years ago. It is beyond uncanny that the narrative describes our service tomorrow at Shearith Israel with such exact precision:

The place of the ark was covered with a black curtain, and the lamp was put out. A table, covered with black, stood before the Tabauh [Teba]; and on a low bench sat the Parnass and the Huzzan [Hazan]. The prayers were exceedingly melancholy, particularly when the Huzzan rose up and went to the place of the Holy of Holies, or the ark and mercy-seat, where he wrapped himself up in the black curtain, and slowly mourned out a most solemn, weeping and doleful lamentation, for the absence of the Debir and the Shekhinah, for the cessation of the oracle, and for the destruction of the holy of holies. The roll of the law was brought out, without any ceremony, covered with black, and read at the foot of the Tabauh; the portion was from Deuteronomy. Then the fourth chapter of Jeremiah was read, and three or four other chapters; then the book of Lamentations; then the beginning and the end of Job.

We sing *kinot*, or lamentations, for hours tomorrow. The service runs from 7:05 am to about 12:00 pm. If you can, stop by even for a little. You will be deeply moved.

We have remarked before about the apocrypha that Napoleon, seeing a Jew mourning the destruction of the Temple then eighteen centuries after the event, remarked that "a people who mourn for their lost temple in their lost homeland thousands of years ago are destined to return and to rebuild it." I've never been sure why we would have needed Napoleon to tell us that. The Talmud said it millennia ago and even more poetically (Tractate Taanit 30b):

Whoever mourns for Jerusalem will merit to see its joy

As a community, let us mourn for Jerusalem and merit to see its joy. Well over the fast to all.

The Congregational Survey. Earlier this week, an email was sent out on behalf of the committee that toiled to put together our Congregational survey last year and that is thinking about how to improve ourselves internally and externally. Here I want to thank that committee for the enormous amount of time it spent on this project: Trustees Vicki Bengualid and Leah Albek and committee members Charlotte Triefus, Marc Wiznia, and Rivka Shoulson. Others too deserve our great thanks for the effort here.

And Other Worthy Congregational Projects.



We are still looking for a few good people to staff the following projects. When all slots are filled, and the projects are a great success, who'll be sorry then, eh?

- 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.
- Share your ideas for youth programming with our Youth Directors, Dalya & Jake Frankel.
- Help Sharon Rosenblum and Alexander Haberman with the Young Professionals programming they are so hard at work at.
- 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.

Name that Haftarah Tune. We are collecting tunes for the haftarot in roughly the first half of Sefer Devarim: **Devarim, Va'etchanan** (this week's parasha), **Eikev, Re'eh**, and **Shoftim**.

Beginning this Shabbat, with the Haftarah for Parashat Va'etchanan, we begin to read the **Seven Haftarot of Consolation**, or the **Sheva D'Nechemta**. They are beautiful, stirring, aspirational prophesies, all from Isaiah. They take us from the sadness and introspection of the Three Weeks and Tisha B'Av to a series of uplifting haftarot leading us to the joy and renewal of Rosh Hashana.

The **Haftarah for Parashat Va'Etchanan** is taken from the first 26 verses of Chapter 40 of the Book of Isaiah. The haftarah begins with the unforgettable words, **יֵאמֶר אֱלֹהֵינוּ, נְחַמּוּ נְחַמּוּ עַמִּי**, or *Comfort, comfort My people, says your G-d*. The verses are known to so many in part because Eric Liddell, the true hero in *Chariots of Fire*, in his Sunday sermon, quotes both from this haftarah and from the

haftarah for Parashat Lech Lecha, also from Isaiah 40. Here for example are verses 15, 17, 23, quoted by the runner-preacher:

Behold, the nations are like a drop in a bucket. ... All the nations are like nothing before Him. ... [W]ho brings princes to nothing, and makes the judges of the like vanity.

Ritual Director and music maven Jay Harwitt has lots of interesting things to say about this haftarah. One, which I had not remembered, is that

- “The entire beginning of [Messiah](#), by Handel, comes from verses 1-5. Parts of 1-3 are a recitative, and verse 5 is the first choral number”

Jay continues that,

- “Farther on, verse 21 inspired Randall Thompson to compose the beginning of the section of *The Peaceable Kingdom* entitled, [Ye Shall Have a Song](#), the remainder of which comes from Isaiah 30:29.

Andrew Druck, MSS, also has an interesting array of suggestions this week:

- [Nachamu Nahamu Ami](#), here sung by Eitan and Shlomo Katz
- [Melech Rachamon](#), here sung by Eitan Katz
- [Shomer Yisroel](#), here sung by Eitan Katz
- [Shomer Yisroel](#), here sung by Shlomo Carlebach (“same words, different song”)
- [Bridge Over Troubled Water](#), here sung by Simon and Garfunkel
- [Let it Be](#), here sung by the Beatles
- [With Me Tonight](#), here sung by the Beachboys
- [Put Your Head on My Shoulder](#), here sung by Paul Anka

For me, there can be only one suggestion: the magnificent, synthesized theme music from that greatest of movies:

- [Chariots of Fire](#)

Tractate Chulin Chapter Six. The global Daf Yomi learning cycle is this week studying pages 80-85 of Tractate Chulin. By page 83b we leave Chapter 5, discussed last week, and focus on a Chapter titled כְּסִי הַדָּם, or *kisyui hadam*, covering the blood. The discussion flows from an explicit Biblical verse (Vayikra 17:13):

וְאִישׁ אִישׁ מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִן־הַגֵּר הַגֵּר בְּתוֹכָם אֲשֶׁר יִצּוּד צִיד תִּיָּה אוֹ־עוֹף אֲשֶׁר יֹאכֵל נִשְׁפָּךְ אֶת־דָּמּוֹ וְנִכְסְהוּ בָּעֵפֶר

And regarding anyone, whether an Israelite or a stranger who resides among them, who hunts down an animal or a bird that may be eaten: they shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth.

Two items of interest occur to me:

First, it is plain from the Torah's text that it is only non-domesticated animals and fowl that need to have their blood covered with dirt when slaughtered in a kosher manner. So a nonkosher slaughter does not need it. And the most commonplace of animal slaughtering (commonplace now, I guess), that of a cow, also does not need it. The Talmud asks why not and gives a few answers including that because cows are used for sacrifices their blood can't be covered with dirt below and above since their sacrificial killing takes place on the Altar. The Talmud rejects the question whether that same rule should apply to fowl, because, we know, that two species of fowl are likewise approved for ritual, sacrificial use. Fowl it turns out need blood covering, period. My ignorant question, however, is a simple one: Blood covering seems so logical, so symbolic. Wouldn't you have expected it to apply across the board?

Second, on page 84b, I just love the homespun wisdom attributed to R' Yochanan, including the sardonic way it is phrased:

ואמר רבי יוחנן: מי שהניח לו אביו מעות ורוצה לאבדן – ילבש כלי פשתן, וישתמש בכלי זכוכית, וישכור פועלים ואל ישב עמהן. ילבוש כלי פשתן – בכיתנא רומיתא. וישתמש בכלי זכוכית – בזוגיתא חיןרתא. וישכור פועלים ואל ישב עמהן – בתורי דנפיש פסידיהו.

And Rabbi Yoḥanan says: In the case of one whose father bequeathed him a great deal of money and he seeks to lose it, he should wear linen garments, and should use glass vessels, and should hire laborers and not sit with them to supervise. The Gemara elaborates: He should wear linen garments; this is stated with regard to Roman linen, which becomes tattered quickly. He should use glass vessels; this is stated with regard to expensive white glass. And he should hire laborers and not sit with them; this applies to laborers who work with oxen, whose potential for causing damage is great if they are not supervised, as they will trample the crops.

Our Next Book Project. We continue to collect suggestions for Jewish characters from mainstream American writers. We were focusing on writers between the wars. I'm not sure that Madelene Towne is limiting the list to that. So send in your suggestions. And send in your willingness to join the club.

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