

August 6, 2026

Dear Shearith Israel family,

Our Year of Allegiance. As we approach the dog days of summer, as we remember Fat Man and Little Boy from one war and Tuchman's masterful *The Guns of August* from another, we have a number of interesting things to follow up on from last week.

Brachot Riddles. Trustee Avery Neumark challenged us to think of blessings or *brachot* that even outside of Israel are recited only once a year. I kept getting stuck on *brachot* like *shechiyanu* on the first night of Hanukkah. Since we say *shechiyanu* for many things throughout the year, it's not really a good suggestion.

Faith Fogelman to the rescue. Faith suggests:

- Prayer for dew on Passover
- Prayer for rain at the end of Succot

Neither Faith nor I can remember if we say any special *brachot* on Hoshana Rabba, like when we hit the *aravot*. Anyone, do we? In any case, the judges are prepared to give Faith two sizable points per guess. Excellent thinking.

R' Alexander Grinberg, of the Center for Jewish Liturgy, also came through big time:

- The bracha on trees, typically made in Nisan.
- *Neilah*, an entire prayer service that doesn't exist other in the late afternoon on Yom Kippur.
- The prayer of Nachaim, נחם, said only on Tisha b'Av in the afternoon.
- זכרונות and שופרות, two of the three parts of the musaf service on Rosh Hashana [Ed. Note: except that Rosh Hashana is two days both in Israel and in the rest of the world].
- The blessing of the candles on Kippur, להדליק נר של יום הכיפורים [here again, we bless candles throughout the year, so, ...]

The Judges enthusiastically award two points for each of Alexander's first three suggestions. An appeal may be taken from the denials with respect to the last two in the time prescribed by law.

Back to Avery – Avery which ones did you have in mind?

Turning the other cheek. Our heavy hitters have much to say about whether Jews and Christians mean the same positive/negative thing when discussing turning the other cheek, a point I raised last week.

Claude Nadaf says:

In our religion, we have the famous praise of those insulted (hanneelabim) and do not insult in return (haolebim) found in the Babylonian Talmud (Tractate Shabbat 88b, Gittin 36b, and Yoma 23a) which is consistent with the New Testament conventional view.

It's a fair observation and a deeply important lesson. But Ritual Director Jay Harwitt disagrees:

[Eicha Chapter 3, which I quoted last week] takes a much more militant stand against the aggressors at the end [in contrast to the New Testament]. What would be the point of all the rules of warfare in the Torah if all we were expected to do was roll over and play dead?

Gil Deutsch provides an extended analysis and comes out someplace in the middle. He is prepared to summarize it as saying that the Christian treatment, "in particular that the Sermon on the Mount, contains a host of similar statements which are not 'proper' for actual living humans. They are exhortations for saintly even heavenly actions."

Here are three smart and thoughtful perspectives. Each is different. Each is deserving of real consideration. And maybe, each is a fair perspective of a living religion.

Dastardly DST. Exactly no one responded to my question of last week suggesting that they preferred daylight savings time all year round. Many of us not only don't want DST in the winter but don't particularly value it in the summer either.

Arthur Tenenholtz captures the view well:

I tolerated DST when it started at the end of April. Starting DST in March made Passover too late for children and for adults. I cannot understand how anyone would want DST in November and December. Children would be waiting for school buses in the dark, in much of the Eastern Time Zone, western NY and Pennsylvania, and all of Ohio, West Virginia and Indiana. However the people of Maine might like year round DST, but that would really be (Canadian) Maritime Time.

So if no one wants it, pray tell how the bill passed in the House? *Sigh.*

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

The **Haftarah for Parashat Re'eh**, the third of the seven haftarot of consolation, is a short one of 12 verses taken from Isaiah 54:11-55:5. Verse 14 provides a good summary:

כָּל־כְּלִי יוֹצֵר עָלָיָהּ לֹא יִצְלַח וְכָל־לֶשׁוֹן תִּקְוִים־אֶתְּךָ לַמִּשְׁפָּט תִּרְשָׁעִי זֹאת גְּחִלַּת עֲבָדֵי יְהוָה וְצִדְקָתָם מֵאֵתִי נֶאֱמַר יְהוָה

Any weapon whetted against you shall not succeed, and any tongue that contends with you in judgment, you shall condemn; this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord and their due reward from Me, says the Lord

Ritual Director Jay Harwitt suggests the following for his haftarah:

- [*Food, Glorious Food*](#), from *Oliver!*
- "I hear the middle of the [*Overture to William Tell*](#) at the beginning (*Unhappy, storm-tossed one, uncomforted!* in our translation of 54:11)"
- [*Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend*](#), from *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*

Andrew Druck, MSS, has two excellent suggestions:

- [*Teach your Children*](#), here by Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young
- [*Love Radiates Around*](#), here by the Roches

The Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth. This week's global Daf Yomi learning cycle is studying pages 94-100 of Tractate Chulin. We are still in Chapter 7, which we will finish by next week.

I don't get beyond page 94 without hearing deeply consonant support of the view expressed by Rabbi Soloveichik two Shabbatot ago. He was discussing the Ten Commandments, which we read that Shabbat (Parashat Va'etchanan). He focused on the last prohibition, against bearing false witness. The injunction against lying or telling half truth's is much on his (and everyone else's) mind as we are treated to one American politician or commentator after another discussing Israel.

The discussion in Tractate Chulin is unequivocal. It begins with Shmuel's adumbration that not lying or misleading others is a rule applicable to statements made to all people, including non-Jews:

דָּאָמַר שְׁמוּאֵל: אִסּוּר לְגַנוֹב דַּעַת הַבְּרִיּוֹת, וְאִפְּלוּ דַּעַתוֹ שֶׁל גּוֹי

Says Shmuel, it is prohibited to deceive any person, including by deceiving a non-Jew.

The great R' Meir and the Sages as a group then articulate a number of examples of prohibited deceptive conduct. Here are a few:

- One may not entreat another to eat with him, making it seem as though he genuinely wants his company, but in reality he entertains him only because he knows that the other will not accept the invitation.
- One may not send another person gifts knowing that the other will not accept them.
- One may not open barrels of wine for a guest if they have already been sold to a storekeeper, unless he notifies the guest beforehand that the barrel had been sold.
- One may not say to another: Anoint yourself with oil and place an empty jug before him with the knowledge that he will not attempt to anoint himself.

- One may not go to a house of mourning with a wine jug in his hand that is mostly empty and where the small amount of wine rattles about, because the mourner will think that his visitor is bringing him a full jug of wine.
- One may not fill up that jug of wine with water, because he thereby misleads the mourner into thinking he has brought him a full jug of undiluted wine.
- One may not sell to another a sandal made from the hide of an animal that died of natural causes as though it were a sandal made from the hide of a healthy animal that was slaughtered.

These may have been ways to mislead that were common at the time of the gemarra. We could surely make our own list today (with some obvious overlaps).

The point here is to be scrupulously honest. We need to go out of our way to make sure our intentions are not misunderstood. And our job is to do this with all people all the time. No excuses. No bending of the rules because one is dealing with the government or with anyone who may not practice what we are preaching. The Talmud once again shows us ***The Things That Matter***.

Our Next Shearith Israel Book Club Readings. As promised, Madelene Towne, with a little help from our [friends](#), has come up with a great title, *Between the Wars: Jewish Characters in 1920s and 1930s American Literature*. And she proposes ([here](#)) 22 books for us to work through this coming year. I love the number (22), which is the number of Mark Twain's published works (numeration differs) that we successfully tackled for our Squintennial. This next adventure will be just as fun.

Here is what you need to do. Look at the list. Email Madelene Towne and me if you are willing to read one or more and identify which ones. Do that in the next week or two. I'm hopeful that, for this series, book club members will not only be able to summarize their reads for publication to the world right here; in addition, we intend to find a few times over the year to get together to discuss.

This is a perfect Shearith Israel project. Join one, join all!

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