

July 18, 2024

Dear Shearith Israel family,

Our Year of Hope. If you are in the City for Shabbat, you really should come and enjoy our services in the Levy Auditorium and our Kiddush out on Paved Paradise. Even with the heat, Kiddush was delightful last Shabbat. Many of us sat around the tables enjoying the ample amounts of good food and the company of our fellow congregants. This week we will have even more food and the luncheon is being sponsored in memory of the Jews of Rhodes who perished during the Holocaust. It's special, even convivial (notwithstanding this week's poignant tribute). Come and enjoy.

Our Community Gold Medalists. Last week, in anticipation of the other Olympics, which begin in Paris on July 26, we awarded two gold medals to true community heroes. We add a third today, to Andre Guenoun. For years, Andre has toiled pro bono keeping the financial records of various of our Congregational Societies, the Hebra, Sisterhood, and 1654 Society – and then some. Deep thanks, Andre, and welcome to GOLD!

This is a suitable place to congratulate Rabbi Soloveichik as well, for being appointed to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. The Commission is a bipartisan body populated through Presidential appointment. It's a wonderful and important moment for our Rabbi to bring Judaism's values to bear in considering the state of religious liberty around the world. No gold medal – not yet, anyway – just our deep and abiding thanks. [Here is the press release](#) announcing the appointment.

One Congregation, Together, in Sorrow and Joy. The subtlety of the beauty of our services may be nearly unmatched. Even our daily service contains quiet yet poignant reminders of who we are as a community.

During the week for much of the year, we pray in the Small Synagogue (a/k/a Little Synagogue) adjacent to our magnificent Sanctuary. The little space is itself a quiet, hidden gem. It replicates a room where our Congregation prayed 200 years ago, with various actual accouterments of worship dating from the Eighteenth Century.

Last Thursday, there were over 50 of us in attendance for morning services in the Small Synagogue. In the same service, we were an actual house of mourning, sadly remembering the passing of Mel Neumark, and at the same time a house of happiness, celebrating the naming of daughter Nora Aliyah by our new members, Jonathan and Nadine Spilky-Raida. At various points in the service, Rabbi Rohde and Reverend Edinger chanted the service in the doleful melody we use in a house of mourning and on Tisha B'Ab. In other parts, they chanted happy melodies we use for holidays and celebrations.

Sorrow and joy; joy and sorrow. One community.

Liberté, Egalité, Charité – Final Thoughts. Recall that Bob Rifkind and Cantor Jay Harwitt both felt that Judaism legislated equality more than I was saying and did not leave the balancing of virtue – between liberty and equality – to social and communal morality. Did Bob go too far by reminding us of *Shmita*, *Yovel*, and *Shabbat* as being examples of that legislation? Claude Nadaf thinks so, though he believes that legislated equality remains a powerful force under another rubric: *Tzedek u'mishpat*, or righteousness. Says Claude (I've changed some of his spellings but not his insight):

It is a BIG DEAL throughout Tanach -- all prophets' battle cry. Starting with G-d's election of Abraham Avinu because G-d knew him to teach his sons and household to do Tzedek u'mishpat. You must appreciate the fact that in the ancient Near East as well as Ancient Israel, there were no social programs as social networks for the underprivileged . . .

I beg to differ, but Shmita, Yovel, and Shabbat are all about impressing the fact that G-d is the creator who owns everything precluding the worship of the forces of nature that give life and death to the farmer and preventing [the People of Israel] from feeling absolute ownership over their land or others.

Peah [leaving the corners of one's field's unharvested, for the poor] is about Tzedek u'mishpat.

This is a deep debate, but in the end everyone seems to agree that Judaism ranks high in creating non-legal means of mediating between liberty and equality. This has been a marvelous dialogue, each the true words of a living Almighty.

In Praise of Teachers. I was just thinking about the book by two economists, Maristella Botticini and Zvi Eckstein, titled *The Chosen Few, How Education Shaped Jewish History, 70-1492*. Putting aside my misgivings about how some of us use the term “chosenness” (see my emails of [12/20/20](#), [8/5/21](#), and [6/9/22](#)), the book is excellent, one of the few I've read where at the end I hoped the authors would extend their historical (and economic) analysis from the Fifteenth Century, where they leave off, to the present. It's a great and clever read.

The thesis of the book is that, after the Temple's destruction in 70 CE, Jews developed not just a passion but an obsession for educating their young people, which included sending children off to school rather than to work; that as a result many Jews left the religion, and Judaism saw a dramatic drop in population in the centuries leading up to the Middle Ages; and that those that remained in the fold strengthened their skills to make a living by focusing on money lending, or “financial intermediation”, since that profession used the key skills that came from education: networking, literacy, and numeracy.

Based on this work, obvious questions include, where and when did the Jewish passion or really the obsession for teaching begin? You need look no further than the pages that the global community of Daf Yomi learners are studying this week. We are holding in Chapter 2 of Tractate Baba Batra (this week, pages 19 to 26). The discussion involves what homeowners can do when the person

living next door is making excessive noise or other assaults on the sensibilities of neighbors. The discussion is fascinating.

As it relates to teaching, the discussion on page 21a says:

תא שָׁמַע: שְׁנַיִם שְׂיוֹשְׁבֵי בְּחֶצֶר, וּבִיקֵשׁ אֶחָד מֵהֶן לַעֲשׂוֹת רוֹפֵא, וְאוֹמֵן, וְגַרְדִּי, וּמְלַמֵּד תִּינוּקוֹת – חֲבִירוֹ מֵעַבְרָה עָלָיו! הֲכֵא נִמְי בְּתִינוּקוֹת דְּגוּיִם.

Come and hear another baraita: With regard to two people who are residing in one courtyard, and one of them sought to become a doctor, a bloodletter, a weaver, or a teacher of children, the other can prevent him from doing so.

The ultimate decision in the Talmud, by the way, is to permit teachers to live and teach where they want. More important, though, is what in the world does a “teacher of children” have to do with the other professions listed? The other professions might be noisy. But a teacher? This is some indication of great activity by and the prevalence of teachers.

The Talmud gets even more explicit. It discusses R’ Yehoshua ben Gamla and beautifully says:

If not for him the Torah would have been forgotten from the Jewish people. Initially, whoever had a father would have his father teach him Torah, and whoever did not have a father would not learn Torah at all. . . .

When the Sages saw that not everyone was capable of teaching their children and Torah study was declining, they instituted an ordinance that teachers of children should be established in Jerusalem. . . . Therefore, the Sages instituted an ordinance that teachers of children should be established in one city in each and every region [pelekh]. And they brought the students in at the age of sixteen and at the age of seventeen. . . .

*But as the students were old and had not yet had any formal education, a student whose teacher grew angry at him would rebel against him and leave. It was impossible to hold the youths there against their will. **This state of affairs continued until Yehoshua ben Gamla came and instituted an ordinance that teachers of children should be established in each and every province and in each and every town, and they would bring the children in to learn at the age of six and at the age of seven.***

It's hard to imagine higher praise than to say that, without a particular Sage, all of Torah would have been forgotten (in fact, I will part with two points for another example in the Talmud – there are a few, but not many). And the praise of R’ Yehoshua ben Gamla is justified because he is credited with starting the process of teaching young children in a rigorous and disciplined and ubiquitous (and let us say democratic) manner. Jews and Judaism, and the world at large, have never been the same.

Quotes Worth Remembering. In these pages, from time to time we come back to the pleasure of a good quote. Here are two for this week, which I just came across:

- In one of the pages of Tractate Baba Batra studied this week (24b), the discussion involves who should pay for a tree that needs to be taken down because it is damaging or threatening to damage someone's property. It is then that the gemara says:

אמר רב כהנא: קידרא דבי שותפי – לא חמימא ולא קרירא.

Rav Kahana said: A pot belonging to partners is neither hot nor cold

That is, if you want to accomplish nothing, enlist a committee!

- John Von Neumann, reacting to colleagues on the Manhattan Project who, after the fact, declared some misgivings about inventing atomic weaponry:

Sometimes someone confesses a sin in order to take credit for it.

Cosmic Question 71824. Why do the [streets have no names](#)?

Send in yours.

Shearith Israel Summer Songbook 2024: Time, Waiting, Journeying. Our final list for this, our most successful Songbook yet. Michael Lewyn ends our entries with two great ones:

- [Take Me Home, Country Roads](#), sung by John Denver
- [Do You Know The Way To San Jose](#), sung by Dionne Warwick

We add those to this, for a combined final list (thumbnail and Spotify links forthcoming):

- [Anticipation](#), by Carly Simon
- [One of these days](#), by Neil Young
- [Waiting for the Sun](#), by The Doors
- [Wishing and Hoping](#), by Dusty Springfield
- [Any Day Now](#), by Chuck Jackson (music by the great Burt Bacharach)
- [Day in - Day Out](#), by Frank Sinatra
- [The Best is Yet to Come](#), by Frank Sinatra
- [It Won't be Long](#), by The Beatles
- [Time on My Hands](#), by Kate and Anna McGarrigle
- [High Hopes](#), by Bruce Springsteen
- [Long Walk Home](#), by Bruce Springsteen
- [Time is on My Side](#), by The Rolling Stones

- [*Time Waits for No One*](#), by The Rolling Stones
- [*The Midnight Hour*](#), by Wilson Pickett
- [*Hejira*](#), by Joni Mitchell
- [*America*](#), by Simon and Garfunkel
- [*All I Want*](#), by Joni Mitchell
- [*Talk to Me of Mendocino*](#), by Kate and Anna McGarrigle
- [*Long Time Gone*](#), by Crosby Stills & Nash
- [*By the Time I Get to Phoenix*](#), by Glen Campbell
- [*On the Atchison, Topeka, & the Santa Fe*](#), by Johnny Mercer
- [*Something's Coming*](#), by Leonard Bernstein from *West Side Story*
- [*My Time of Day*](#), by Frank Loesser from *Guys and Dolls*
- [*The Wells Fargo Wagon*](#), by Meredith Wilson from *The Music Man*
- [*Summertime*](#), by The Jamies
- [*Working My Way Back To You Girl*](#), by The Four Seasons
- [*Sunrise, Sunset*](#), from *Fiddler On the Roof* (Perry Como version)
- [*Tie A Yellow Ribbon*](#), by Tony Orlando and Dawn
- [*When Johnny Comes Marching Home*](#), Mitch Miller rendition
- [*September of My Years*](#), by Frank Sinatra
- [*Once Upon a Time*](#), by Frank Sinatra
- [*As Time Goes By*](#), by Frank Sinatra
- [*Day In Day Out*](#), by Frank Sinatra
- [*Sentimental Journey*](#), by Frank Sinatra
- [*When the World was Young*](#), by Frank Sinatra
- [*Funny How Time Slips Away*](#), by Willie Nelson
- [*Tomorrow is a Long Time*](#), by Bob Dylan
- [*Time has Come Today*](#), by The Chambers Brothers
- [*Dock of the Bay*](#), by Otis Redding
- [*Waitin' for the Train to Come In*](#), by Peggy Lee
- [*Tous les garçons and les filles*](#), by Françoise Hardy
- [*When the Saints Come Marching In*](#), by many artists including Louis Armstrong
- [*Leaving on a Jet Plane*](#), by Peter, Paul, and Mary
- [*Come Back to Me*](#), this one by Peggy Lee
- [*Tonight*](#), this version from Spielberg's 2021 *West Side Story*
- [*I Would Walk 500 Miles*](#), by The Proclaimers
- [*Travelin' Prayer*](#), by Billy Joel
- [*2000 Light Years From Home*](#), by The Rolling Stones
- [*Homeward Bound*](#), by Simon and Garfunkel
- [*Fly Me To The Moon*](#), by Frank Sinatra
- [*Up, Up and Away*](#), by The 5th Dimension
- [*The Long and Winding Road*](#), by The Beatles
- [*All Over the World*](#), by ELO
- [*Jet Airliner*](#), by The Steve Miller Band
- [*Nights Are Forever*](#), by England Dan and John Ford Coley
- [*Time In a Bottle*](#), by Jim Croce

- [Take it Easy](#), by The Eagles
- [Waiting For a Girl Like You](#), by Foreigner
- [Running On Empty](#), by Jackson Brown
- [Last Train to Clarksville](#), by The Monkees
- [Do You Know the Way to San Jose](#), by Dionne Warwick
- [Arrival](#), by ABBA
- [Alabama Bound](#), by Leadbelly
- [Downbound Train](#), by Bruce Springsteen
- [Circle Game](#), by Joni Mitchell
- [Dancing in the Dark](#), by Frank Sinatra
- [On My Way to Town](#), by Kate and Anna McGarrigle
- [Walking Song](#), by Kate and Anna McGarrigle
- [Traveling Man](#), by Ricky Nelson
- [Waiting on a Sunny Day](#), by Bruce Springsteen
- [Yesterday](#), by the Beatles
- [Get Back](#), by the Beatles
- [It was a Very Good Year](#), by Frank Sinatra
- [After Midnight](#), by Eric Clapton
- [April Come She Will](#), by Simon and Garfunkel
- [Some Enchanted Evening](#), from South Pacific
- [The Wanderer](#), by Dion
- [Someday We'll Be Together](#), by Diana Ross & the Supremes
- [High Hopes](#), by Frank Sinatra
- [Over and Over](#), by Neil Young
- [The Two of Us](#), by the Beatles
- [City of New Orleans](#), by Arlo Guthrie
- [Long, Long Time](#), sung by Linda Ronstadt (this is a great song written by Gary White)
- [Me and Bobby McGee](#), sung by Janis Joplin
- [Someday Soon](#), sung by Judy Collins
- [500 Miles](#), sung by Peter, Paul, and Mary
- [Who Knows Where the Time Goes?](#), sung here by Fairport Convention
- [Sweet Baby James](#), sung by James Taylor
- [Somewhere Over the Rainbow](#), sung by Judy Garland

Thank you all. Bless us all. Shabbat shalom. *B'yachad* (united together). יהיה טוב *Yihiyeh tov* (things will be good).

Louis Solomon, Parnas