

Purim Shpiels
Congregation Beth Israel
Vancouver BC Canada

Updated March 2021

Here are descriptions and song lists for a series of ten Purim shpiels created and written by Jonathan Berkowitz, with collaboration by Christie Menzo for #6, #7, #8, #9 and with Deborah Stern Silver for #3.

The older set of five shpiels (2010 to 2014) have two parts, a script and a set of songs. The songs have new lyrics that tell about the characters and places in the megillah. While the songs are meant to supplement the script, the two parts are independent. The scripts can stand alone and be performed without the songs. In our productions the songs have some audience participation. We project the lyrics on a large screen so that the entire congregation can sing along with the choir. The themes, from #5 to #1, are: Star Trek, James Bond, Fairy Tales, Shakespeare, Dr. Seuss.

The newer set of four shpiels (2017 to 2020) are musicals: a full set of songs with new lyrics, tied together with some narration. The musical inspirations, from #9 to #6, are: movie music, Broadway hits, Simon and Garfunkel, and The Beatles. Some songs are designed to be sung by soloists, others by the full chorus/company. As with the first set, we project the lyrics on a large screen over the stage (i.e. the bima) so the congregation can join in with the singers.

The tenth shpiel (2021) was done online, with narration and pre-recorded songs chosen from past shpiels.

#10 (2021) PURIM PANDEM-ONIUM: The Show Must Go On... Zoom
Narration by Jonathan Berkowitz
Song Lyrics by Jonathan Berkowitz
February 2021

This shpiel departed from the format of the past four musicals. Because of the pandemic, it was done on-line because of the pandemic.

The story of Purim was re-imagined and set in modern times in the midst of a pandemic. It was told in the form of a special report on JNN, the Jewish News Network, through narration and eight songs, seven hits from past shpiels and a new one.

The songs were recorded one track at a time from home computers and smartphones—each instrumental track, and each solo singer—and then assembled by our musical director. All songs were sung by a soloist—no choir. The narration was done live on Zoom, with the pre-recorded songs interwoven. The online production was a great success, and because it was online, we had people from other time zones, and other countries (including Israel) signing in to watch.

Here is a list of the songs, with new and original titles.

- #1 The 28th Avenue Shul Song / Shpielin' Groovy (*The 59th Street Bridge Song / Feelin' Groovy – Simon and Garfunkel*)
- #2. Send in My Clowns (*Send in the Clowns – Stephen Sondheim, Judy Collins*)
- #3. Mr. Mordechai (*Mrs. Robinson – Simon and Garfunkel*)
- #4. I Am a Shmuck (*I Am a Rock – Simon and Garfunkel*)
- #5. If You Could Read My Mind (*If You Could Read My Mind – Gordon Lightfoot*)
- #6. You Don't Know Haman (*Piano Man – Billy Joel*)
- #7. Shpiel Over Troubled Water (*Bridge Over Troubled Water – Simon and Garfunkel*)
- #8. Please, A Vaccine (*Sweet Caroline – Neil Diamond*) [NEW]

#9 (2020) THAT'S ESTHERTAINMENT! (Songs from the Movies)

Narration by Jonathan Berkowitz

Song Lyrics by Jonathan Berkowitz and Christie Menzo

March 2020

This shpiel is our fourth in a series of musicals; it is a tribute to music from the silver screen (i.e. movies). The story of Purim is told through nearly 25 songs -- some of the best-loved songs over nine decades of film production. Our title is a nod to 1974 film, *That's Entertainment!* that celebrated the 50th anniversary of MGM Studios.

The narration used to tie the songs together includes references to more than 20 other well-known songs from the movies. The narration leads to one- or two-line excerpts that the audience is challenged to identify. And you'll say "Thanks for the memory."

Here is a list of the songs, with the new titles, the original titles and films they were featured in, and whether the song is for chorus, duet or soloist. Our production was a smash hit, with the congregation / audience singing along to the new lyrics projected on a big screen over the stage.

- CHORUS: #0 PRELUDE: Join Me [*Born Free, Born Free*] (%)
- CHORUS: #1a Hakuna Megillah [*Hakuna Matata, The Lion King*] (%)
- CHORUS: #1b Purim Tradition [*Rainbow Connection, The Muppets Movie*] (%)
- DUET: #2 City of Jews [*City of Stars, La La Land*] (%)
- CHORUS: #3 Super-ruler of all Persia
[*Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious, Mary Poppins*] (%)
- VASHTI & CH.: #4 I Won't Go [*Let It Go (Frozen)*] (&)
- HEGAI & CH.: #5 Working Day and Night [(9 to 5, 9 to 5)] (%)
- MORDECHAI & CH.: #6 Mordechai Great Guy [*Que Sera Sera, The Man Who Knew Too Much*] (%)
- ESTHER & CH.: #7a The Way I'll Look Tonight [*The Way You Look Tonight, Swing Time*] (&)
- CHORUS: #7b Everything Was Awesome (Excerpt)
[*Everything is Awesome, The Lego Movie*] (%)
- HAMAN: #8 You've Got a Fiend in Me [*You've Got a Friend in Me, Toy Story*] (%)
- CHORUS or DUET: #9 It's Worth a Try [*As Time Goes By, Casablanca*] (%)
- ESTHER: #10 Banquets Are What I Do Best (Excerpt)
[*Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend, Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*] (%)
- ESTHER & CH.: #11 Soon, Dinner [*Moon River, Breakfast at Tiffany's*] (%)
- HAMAN & CH.: #12 Haman's Lament [*The Trolley Song, Meet Me in St. Louis*] (%)
- KING & CH.: #13 Kill the King [*Kiss the Girl, The Little Mermaid*] (&)
- KING & CH.: #14 Shame [*Fame; Fame, the Movie*] (%)
- ESTHER: #15 A Mouthful of Brisket [*A Spoonful of Sugar, Mary Poppins*] (%)
- HAMAN & ESTHER: #16 Gallows [*Shallow, A Star is Born*] (&)
- KING: #17 Givin' You My Ring [*Singin' in the Rain, Singin' in the Rain*] (%)
- SOLO (or CH.): #18 Raindrops Were Falling Like the Dead
[*Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*] (%)
- SOLO (or CH.): #19 Tale for the Ages [*Over the Rainbow, The Wizard of Oz*] (%)
- CHORUS: #20 It Is Time to Sing Out, Sing Out
[*If You Want to Sing Out, Sing Out; Harold and Maude*] (%)
- CHORUS: #21 The Gragger Swing [*Time Warp, The Rocky Horror Picture Show*] (%)
- DUET: #22 CREDITS: Nobody Does it Better (*The Spy Who Loved Me*) (%)

#8 (2019) HAMANALOT: A BROADWAY SHPIEL-ACLE
Script by Jonathan Berkowitz
Song Lyrics by Jonathan Berkowitz and Christie Menzo
March 2019

This shpiel is our third in a series of musicals, and it is a tribute to great Broadway musicals. The story of Purim is told through nearly 20 songs -- some of the best-loved songs from the best-known productions. Our title is a nod to the great musical *Camelot*, and of course to the Monty Python musical *Spamalot*. We decided against calling our production *Haman-ty Python and the Holy Shpiel*.

The narration used to tie the songs together includes references to more than 20 other great Broadway songs. The narration leads to one- or two-line excerpts that are sung a capella by the chorus. "There's something for everybody, comedy tonight!"

Here is a list of the songs, with the new titles, the original titles, and whether it is chorus or soloist. Our production was a smash hit, with the congregation/audience singing along to the new lyrics projected on a big screen over the stage.

Song List:

- CHORUS: #0 PRELUDE: There's No Business Like Shpiel Business
(There's No Business Like Show Business, *Annie Get Your Gun*)
- CHORUS: #1a We Have a Shpiel (I Have a Dream, *Mamma Mia!*)
- SOLO: #1b Prologue (Jacob & Sons, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*)
- KING: #2 I Am Such a Rich King (If I Were a Rich Man, *Fiddler on the Roof*)
- KING: #3 You Look Pretty (I Feel Pretty, *West Side Story*)
- VASHTI: #4 Don't Exile Me Achashverosh (Don't Cry for Me Argentina, *Evita*)
- KING: #5 Send in My Clowns (Send in the Clowns, *A Little Night Music*)
- KING: #6 She's the One That I Want (You're the One That I Want, *Grease*)
- CHORUS: #7 Overheard Things (My Favourite Things, *The Sound of Music*)
- MORDECHAI: #8 No Haman Never (Old Man River, *Showboat*)
- ESTHER: #9 I've Got Tsuris (I Got Rhythm, *Girl Crazy*)
- ESTHER: #10 Dinnertime (Summertime, *Porgy and Bess*)
- CHORUS: #11 We'll Hang Him, Tomorrow (Tomorrow, *Annie*)
- KING: #12 I Haven't Slept All Night (I Could Have Danced All Night, *My Fair Lady*)
- CHORUS: #13 Hamanamia (Mamma Mia, *Mamma Mia!*) (&)
- CHORUS: #14 Do You Hear the Jews Now Sing? (Do You Hear the People Sing?
Les Misérables)
- ESTHER: #15 Nightmares (Memory, *Cats*)
- CHORUS: #16 Always Believe That Our Future is Bright
(Always Look on the Bright Side of Life, *Spamalot*)
- CHORUS: #17 Hurray for Us / We Jews Live On (Aquarius / Let the Sunshine In, *Hair*)
- CHORUS: Encore #1: Purim, Pesach (Sunrise, Sunset, *Fiddler on the Roof*)
- CHORUS: Encore #2: So Long, Farewell (So Long, Farewell, *The Sound of Music*)

#7 (2018) SHPIEL OVER TROUBLED WATER

Script by Jonathan Berkowitz

Song Lyrics by Jonathan Berkowitz and Christie Menzo

February 2018

This shpiel is another musical. The story of Purim is told through more than 20 songs from the Simon and Garfunkel catalogue, including a couple from Paul Simon's solo career. In fact, the song list here represents about half of all the recorded S&G songs! Once again, it is amazing just how well these classic songs, with brand new lyrics of course, correspond to the story, with its heroes, villains, and twisting plot line. Perhaps it isn't surprising since Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel were two nice Jewish boys from New York.

The narration used to tie the songs together is based on *Star Wars*. You will hear all the ways in which the Star Wars story is remarkably like the Purim story. The plot lines are very similar. And think about Yoda and the Jedi and Yoda; those names sound suspiciously like Judah, Yehuda, and Jews!

Here is a list of the songs, with the new titles, the original titles, and whether it is chorus or soloist. This singalong shpiel was another **huge hit** with our congregation.

Song List:

CHORUS:	#1 The 28 th Avenue Shul Song / Shpielin' Groovy (The 59 th Street Bridge Song / Feelin' Groovy)
CHORUS:	#2 Achashverosh (Richard Cory)
KING:	#3 Queen Vashti (Cecilia)
CHORUS:	#4 A Real To-do (At the Zoo)
Excerpt only	#4b Uncle and Niece Communion (Mother and Child Reunion)
KING:	#5 I Am a Groovy King (We've Got a Groovy Thing Goin')
MORDECHAI:	#6 Eyes on the Crown (Homeward Bound)
HAMAN:	#7 I'm Now P.M. (Scarborough Fair/Canticle)
HAMAN:	#8 I Am a Shmuck (I Am a Rock)]
CHORUS:	#9 Save the Lives of the Jews (Save the Life of My Child)
ESTHER:	#10 Dilemmas (Patterns)
KING:	#11 Time to Be Asking (Song for The Asking)
HAMAN:	#12 A Loser or a Winner (A Hazy Shade of Winter)
KING:	#13 The King's Song (Kathy's Song)
HAMAN/CHORUS:	#14 Fifty Ways to Offer Honour (Fifty Ways to Leave Your Lover)
CHORUS:	#15 The Crucial Conversation (The Dangling Conversation)
HAMAN:	#16 Maybe They Won't Hang Me (Somewhere They Can't Find Me)
CHORUS:	#17 El Purim Pasa / All Is Good (El Condor Pasa / If I Could)
CHORUS:	#18 A Scene of Violence (The Sound of Silence)
DUET / CHORUS:	#19 Bye Bye Haman (Bye Bye Love)
CHORUS:	#20 Mr. Mordechai (Mrs. Robinson)
CHORUS:	#21 The Book of Esther (The Boxer)
SOLO / CHORUS:	#22 Shpiel Over Troubled Water (Bridge Over Troubled Water)

#6 (2017) MAGICAL MYSTERY SHPIEL

Narration by Jonathan Berkowitz

Song Lyrics by Jonathan Berkowitz and Christie Menzo

March 2017

This shpiel is a musical. The story of Purim is told through more than 20 songs from The Beatles catalogue and from Paul McCartney's solo career. It is amazing just how well these classic songs, with brand new lyrics of course, correspond to the story, with its heroes, villains, and twisting plot line. Perhaps it isn't surprising since The Beatles were known as the Fab Four, and Judaism is based on our fab forefathers. The narration used to tie the songs together is based on Harry Potter, since he was a wizard and did magic, and this is a **magical mystery shpiel**. Included are groan-worthy puns on all seven titles in the Harry Potter series. Here is a list of the songs, with the new titles, the original titles, and whether it is chorus or soloist. An asterisk (*) indicates that the song was from Paul McCartney's solo career. This singalong shpiel was a **huge hit** with our congregation.

Song List:

CHORUS: #1 Sing for Real, Sing with Zeal (Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da)
CHORUS: #2 Life in Shushan (Here Comes the Sun)]
KING: #3 Hey Vashti (Dear Prudence)]
CHORUS: #4 Kick Out the Bride (Ticket to Ride)]
CHORUS: Excerpt: We're So Sorry, Achashverosh (Uncle Albert/Admiral Halsey*)
CHORUS: Excerpt: Lady Hadassah (Lady Madonna)
ESTHER: #5 Come Help Me Rule the Land (I Want to Hold Your Hand)]
CHORUS: #6 The Jew By the Gate (The Fool on the Hill)]
HAMAN: #7 Bow Down (Get Back)]
HAMAN: #8 Got to Get Them Out of My Life (Got to Get You into My Life)]
CHORUS: #9 Help! (Help!)]
KING: #10 Tell Me Do (Love Me Do)]
HAMAN: #11 She Loves Me (She Loves You)]
KING: #12 A Hard Day's Night (A Hard Day's Night)]
HAMAN: #13 Haman's Lament (In My Life)]
HAMAN: #14 We Can Work It Out (We Can Work It Out)]
CHORUS: #15 Haman's Time Has Come (Band on the Run*)
KING: #16 From Me to You (From Me to You)]
CHORUS: Excerpt: Haman's Demise (Nineteen Hundred and Eighty-Five *)
CHORUS: #17 We Are Jews (Let It Be)]
CHORUS: #18 World of Challenges/Celebration (Yellow Submarine/Octopus's Garden mashup)]
CHORUS: #19 Hey Jews (Hey Jude)]
[CHORUS: Encore: Hallelujah (Tribute to Leonard Cohen)]

No shpiel written in 2015 or 2016

#5 (2014) D'VAR TREK: THE WRATH OF HAMAN

Script by Jonathan Berkowitz

Song Lyrics by Jonathan Berkowitz

March 2014

We pay tribute to another of the entertainment industry's most loved franchises – Star Trek. The crew of the Enterprise, led by Captain James T. Kirkowitz (the T stands for Mordechai) investigate and intervene on the planet Shushan which threatens to destabilize and persecute minority populations. Unlike the previous shpiels this one tells the story only with dialogue, not narration, so find some scenery-chewing actors and a logical individual who can raise one eyebrow. We hope this shpiel lives long and prospers. Once again, popular baby boomer generation songs with new lyrics are interwoven with the text to supplement the story.

Song 1: The Book of Esther (*The Boxer – Simon and Garfunkel*)

Song 2: Hit the Road Queen (*Hit the Road Jack – Ray Charles*)

Song 3: Good Guy, Achashverosh (*Ruby Tuesday – The Rolling Stones*)

Song 4: Mr. Mordechai (*Mrs. Robinson – Simon and Garfunkel*)

Song 5: Help! (*Help! – The Beatles*)

Song 6: If You Could Read My Mind (*If You Could Read My Mind – Gordon Lightfoot*)

Song 7: You Don't Know Haman (*Piano Man – Billy Joel*)

Song 8: City of Old Shushan (*City of New Orleans – Steve Goodman*)

Song 9: Read the Megillah (*Get Together – The Youngbloods*)

#4 (2013) HAMAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN: LICENCE TO SHPIEL
Script by Jonathan Berkowitz
Song Lyrics by Jonathan Berkowitz
February 2013

Get your tuxedos and vodka martini supplies ready for our fourth shpiel, a tribute to 50 years of James Bond. It has all the plot devices and famous lines from the Bond films. Two spies from the Biblical Intelligence Service (BI6), Israel Bond and Hadassah Goodheavens go undercover to foil the evil schemes of Scara-Haman-ga, also known as Haman. Witty dialogue and narration abound, but be warned: beginning with a prologue having puns on all 24 Bond film titles, the groan factor is very high! And like Bond films this shpiel has a PG rating. As in the previous shpiels, popular baby boomer generation songs with new lyrics are interwoven with the text to supplement the story.

Song List:

Instrumental medley of Bond theme songs

Song 1: We Are Jews (*Let It Be – The Beatles*)

Song 2: Sent to the Desert (*A Horse with No Name – America*)

Song 3: Achashverosh Wears the Persian Crown (*For What It's Worth – Buffalo Springfield*)

Song 4: Mordechai, Great Guy (*Que Sera Sera – Doris Day*)

Song 5: We Remember Her (*Every Breath You Take – The Police*)

Song 6: Shushan, Shushan (*New York, New York – Frank Sinatra*)

Song 7: Haman's Demise (*Another One Bites The Dust – Queen*)

Song 8: Die Haman Die (*Live and Let Die – Paul McCartney*)

Song 9: Hurray For Us / We Jews Live On (*Aquarius / Let the Sunshine In – The Fifth Dimension*)

#3 (2012) HAMANSEL AND GRETEL (... AND ESTHER): A PURIM FAIRY TALE
Script by Jonathan Berkowitz and Deborah Stern Silver
Song Lyrics by Jonathan Berkowitz
February 2012

Characters and plot devices from many beloved fairy tales have been stitched together to retell the Purim story. Join Estherella and Charming Mordechai as they save the Jews from the evil troll Hamansel. This script has much more dialogue than the first two shpiels and gives lots of juicy lines for actors to ham(an) it up. There are also more puns that you can shake a shtick at. Once again, popular baby boomer generation songs with new lyrics are interwoven with the text to supplement the story.

Song List:

- Song 1: A Shul in Vancouver (*House of the Rising Sun – The Animals*)
- Song 2: Queen Vashti (*Cecilia – Simon and Garfunkel*)
- Song 3: Meet Mordechai (*Sweet Caroline – Neil Diamond*)
- Song 4: Told in the Purim Megillah (*Blowin' in the Wind – Bob Dylan*)
- Song 5: Shushan (*Downtown – Petula Clark*)
- Song 6: Noble Queen Esther (*The Letter – The Box Tops*)
- Song 7: Hey, Jews (*Hey Jude – The Beatles*)
- Song 8: Jews of the World (*Joy to the World – Three Dog Night*)

#2 (2011) HAMANLET, OR THE MERCHANT OF MENACE

Script by Jonathan Berkowitz

Song Lyrics by Jonathan Berkowitz

March 2011

This shpiel pays tribute to the Bard. It tells the Purim story by weaving together 64 Shakespearean extracts with additional material in the style of Shakespeare. Some extracts are direct quotations, others are slightly “massaged.” For the academically-oriented there is a complete list of notes with references to the play, act, scene and line numbers for each extract! The story is told primarily through narration, so the cast requires a series of narrators. Join Congregation Mac-Beth Israel in this era of our brave new world of Purim shpiels. Popular baby boomer generation songs with new lyrics are interwoven with the text to supplement the story.

Song List:

Song 1: Sing For Real, Sing With Zeal (*Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da – The Beatles*)

Song 2: Queen Vashti (*Lemon Tree – Peter Paul & Mary*)

Song 3: My Dear Mordechai (*Bei Mir Bis Du Schoen – The Andrews Sisters*)

Song 4: Shushan Jews (*Song Sung Blue – Neil Diamond*)

Song 5: This Noose Was Made For Hangin' (*These Boots Were Made for Walkin' – Nancy Sinatra*)

Song 6: The Ballad of Achashverosh (*The Ballad of Davy Crockett – Fess Parker*)

Song 7: Thank You Queen Esther (*Happy Together – The Turtles*)

Song 8: Hallelujah (*Hallelujah – Leonard Cohen*)

#1 (2010) GREEN EGGS AND HAMAN

Script by Jonathan Berkowitz

Song 1 Lyrics by Jonathan Berkowitz; Songs 2-7 Lyrics by Michael Zoosman

February 2010

Our first shpiel is a tribute to the great Dr. Seuss, who played a big part in so many young lives (including the author's). The script tells the Purim story in the style of Dr. Seuss (60 quatrains in iambic tetrameter, if you want the technical terms). Most of the script is narration, with a few lines of dialogue just as in Seuss books. The script is interspersed with songs having new lyrics to supplement the telling of the story. The songs are from well-known Broadway musicals and Gilbert & Sullivan. Oh, the places you'll go when you perform this shpiel!

Song List:

Song 1: A Modern Major-General (from *Pirates of Penzance*)

Song 2: Memories (from *Cats*)

Song 3: Man of La Mancha (from *Man of La Mancha*)

Song 4: Who am I (from *Les Miserables*)

Song 5: Kiss the Girl (from *The Little Mermaid*)

Song 6: Day-O/ Banana Boat Song

Song 7: Do-Re-Mi (from *The Sound of Music*)