

March 9, 2023

Dear Shearith Israel family,

**Covid-19 Update: Negócios Como Sempre**



If the above is not immediately understandable to you, click [here](#).

We had a wonderful Purim as a community. We had a banner crowd to celebrate the holiday, both in the evening and in the morning. Rabbi Rohde's reading of the Megillah was, as ever, beautiful. Our women's Megillah reading, decades old by now, went smoothly, I'm advised. Our Sisterhood organized a cupcake-themed Mishloach Manot exchange for our Congregation. And on Purim night we celebrated Daveedy Soloveichik's bar mitzvah with a full and lively crowd for post-Megillah break-fast and Daveedy's siyyum of Zeraim, the first Order of the Mishna. Mazal tov to Rabbi and Layaliza Soloveichik and to Daveedy, brothers, and sister.

**Shrink-wrapped Talmud.** Shrink-wrap is a modern marvel. True, it was annoying to try to open CDs when they were wrapped so tightly, the end to "tear up" never being quite where it was supposed to be. But how many people today even know what a CD is, much less care how we got the wrapper off?

Shrink-wrap has two extraordinary qualities. It's tight-fitting, and it's transparent. Nothing loose, flabby, or flaccid. And nothing is hidden from view or secretive; the inside is there for everyone to see.

The shrink-wrap metaphor seems apt to describe Talmudic study in general and perfect to describe the pages of Chapter 6 of Tractate Nazir that the Daf Yomi learning cycle is considering this week. Here we meet a Mishna on page 44a. If you haven't been learning the Tractate until now, page 44a is a perfect place to start. As if starting from the beginning, it lists the three crucial acts that are forbidden to a nazirite: coming in contact with human death, hair-shaving, and use of products of the grapevine. Then, the Mishna and the Gemara that follows discuss respects in which one or another of those three prohibitions is stricter than the other two. The mixing and matching occur over a series of nine examples of logical reduction.

The following excerpt (with helpful if a little stilted translation from Sefaria) gives a flavor:

חוּקָר בְּטוּמָה וּבְתִגְלַחַת מִבֵּזֶעֶם מִן הַגָּפֶן, שְׁבֻטּוֹמָה וּבְתִגְלַחַת — סֻתְּרִין, וּבֵיזֶעֶם מִן הַגָּפֶן — אֲינֵנוֹ סֻתְּרִין.

*There is a greater stricture with regard to the prohibitions of impurity and shaving than that of substances that emerge from the vine, as impurity and shaving negate his naziriteship, i.e., he*

*must add thirty days to his term of naziriteship or start it afresh. But if he eats or drinks that which emerges from the vine, this does not negate his naziriteship.*

*חומר ביצא מני הגפן מבטומאה ובתגלחת, שהויצא מני הגפן לא הותר מכללו, וטומאה ותגלחת הותרו. מכללן בתגלחת מצוה ובמת מצוה.*

*Conversely, there is a greater stricture with regard to substances that emerge from the vine than with regard to impurity and shaving, as in the case of products that emerge from the vine nothing is exempted from its general prohibition in certain circumstances, i.e., there are no exceptions. But with regard to impurity and shaving certain cases are exempted from their general prohibition. For example, there are the cases of obligatory shaving, e.g., a leper who was purified during his naziriteship, and of a corpse with no one to bury it [met mitzva]. A nazirite may tend to the burial of a met mitzva, despite the fact that he will thereby contract ritual impurity from a corpse.*

The mode of logical inference used in the discussion is that of the “*kal v’chomer*” - an “if/then” mode, if x is right then y is surely right. It is one of the leading methods of inference listed in the C-A-M-P liturgy and the thirteen methods of logical deduction that I discussed on [1/5/23](#). The *kal v’chomer* is a mainstay of reasoning in every mode of logical inference known to the intelligent world (how do I know that? I don’t). In the end, through the examples given and the discussions surrounding them, one gains a deep understanding of each of the three prohibitions and the ways in which exceptions to them may or may not be shared by the other prohibitions.

The methodology is brilliant. It is pure shrink-wrap. The logic is tight; there is no wiggling out of a *kal v’chomer*. Indeed, it is for that reason that our jurisprudence does not limit the number or type of *kal v’chomers* that one can employ in making arguments. When we reason from the similarity of words in different passages (a different mode of inference called a *gezera shava*), we require a tradition or a passing down from Rabbi to student over the generations to ensure that we don’t overuse the word-similarity method of reasoning. Not so with a *kal v’chomer*; anyone at any time can try to come up with the logical if/then structure that will compel an answer (not a final halakhic one to impose punishment, but a rationale) based on how compelling the logic is.

And, like any good shrink-wrap, the logic is fully transparent. Everyone sees and can understand or question the argumentation. It is democratic to its core. There is nothing hidden, nothing secret, nothing beyond our ken. If the logic fails the argument fails. If the logic holds – well it can fulcrum the entire world (oh you know where that’s from – no points for getting that right).

Join the worldwide Daf Yomi community now. You will sharpen your mind, deepen your understanding, and participate in a stimulating and enriching experience with all the benefits a community project engenders.

**The Shearith Israel Winter Song List: Last Call.** I'm losing the battle against holiday winter songs, since look at the street cred of the people suggesting the songs.

- Rabbi Moshe Edelman and a number of others acknowledge that [White Christmas](#), is a good answer for the "wrong congregation." Yet they suggest it. Should we relent? Does it help or hurt that the song was written by a Jew?
- And if we do relent, do we accept Carla Schein's [Do You Want To Build A Snowman?](#)

I say they are in. But this is the last call for the Winter Songbook (after all, Purim is now behind us, and our Festival of Spring is on the horizon). Get in your final suggestions. Thanks.

**Rock N'Roll, Both Richer and Poorer.** Two recent events in the world of R&R have deep resonance in our own community.

Last week we were gladdened by Joni Mitchell's acceptance of the Library of Congress's Gershwin Prize for Popular Song. How does that apply to us? It is JM's [Big Yellow Taxi](#), and its reference to paved paradise that were the inspiration of the winning name of the outdoor space that has been the source of unending value to us as a community since 2020. So if you're one of the few critics of the moniker Paved Paradise, bring your complaints to the Library of Congress.

And in January we noted the passing of David Crosby ([1/26/23](#)). His song with Crosby Stills Nash & Young, [Déjà Vu](#), contains the great refrain,

*We have all been here before*

This phrase, like the currently fashionable mantra of indigenous peoples vying to be remembered, "we are still here," is reminiscent of our Word of the Year (suggested by Michael Schulder, who has been oddly quiet since his triumph), with which we close our weekly emails:

*Here*

Joni and David. Here, now, and forever.

**Quote Check.** Rabbi Soloveichik often quotes the Andrew Roberts history of Winston Churchill, titled *Churchill: Walking with Destiny*. One quote in particular describes Churchill's belief in G-d as being in a deity whose job it was to look after Winston Churchill. Roberts published his master-work in 2018.

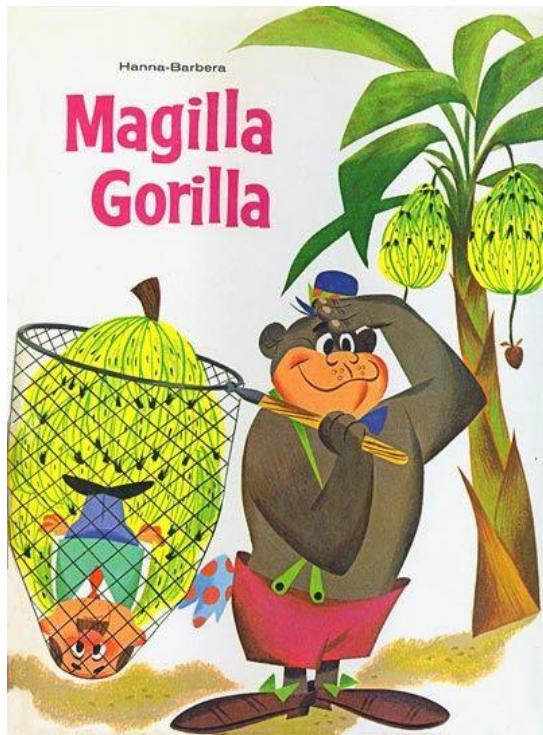
The phrase isn't really novel. Let's remember the quote from the great song from the Rock Opera *Hair*, from the late 1960s, [\*Manchester England\*](#). As I mentioned in my email of [12/16/2021](#), in the song, hero Claude sings:

*Manchester England England  
Across the Atlantic Sea  
And I'm a genius genius  
I believe in God  
And I believe that God  
Believes in Claude  
That's me that's me*

Now obviously the quote wasn't original in the late 1960s either. But, still, why isn't anyone giving credit?

**Purim in Israel.** From friend and photographer-extraordinaire Lisa Wurtele, enjoy three great Purim photos from Jerusalem – and a funny cartoon:





Thank you all. Bless us all. Shabbat shalom. Here! *Kaminando kon Buenos.*

Louis Solomon, Parnas