

November 6, 2025

Dear Shearith Israel family,

Our Year of Allegiance. Ner News for the 250th. Tomorrow, many of us are off to Newport for our Touro weekend. We are thrilled to be able to be with our partners, Congregation Ahavath Israel, in observing Shabbat at Touro Synagogue. Then, on Sunday afternoon, Rabbi Soloveichik will be giving a public address at Touro commemorating Kristallnacht and in celebration of Jewish Life at Brown University, and my own favorite A Cappella group, Yale's Magevet, will be giving a concert at the synagogue as well.

Hopefully, we will all be back next Shabbat for another of the Rabbi's lecture installments on The 250th. In the meantime, for this Shabbat at Shearith Israel, enjoy *Friday Night Lights* with Reverend Edinger, a morning talk and afternoon class by Baruch-Lev Kelman, and please welcome our new youth directors, the husband-and-wife team of Dalya Stokar and Jake Frankel, who seem to have more time while attending law school than I did. Let's all help them make a great success of their efforts on behalf of our youth.

Short Songs Neither Die Nor Fade Away. This contest has been over for a year-and-a-half, but we are still getting new, great suggestions for short songs. Warren Stern suggests two:

- [*Wild Honey Pie*](#), here sung by the Beatles (Warren can't help his quip: "It's amazing what a superstar can get away with" – that is, the song is atrocious, but Paul McCartney is the best of the best of the best and so has some fouls to give); and
- [*Suze \(The Cough Song\)*](#), here by Bob Dylan [one of Dylan's better vocals, imho]

Name that Haftarah Tune. We are now collecting tunes for the **haftarot** of the first five parshiot: **Bereshit, Noah, Lech Lecha, Vayeira** (this week's haftarah), and **Chayei Sarah**.

Two excellent entries for **Haftarah Lech Lecha** deserve mention:

First, Gabriella Styler (our hidden poet laureate?) finds in Isaiah 40-14, verse 4:

Who called the generations from the beginning, Hashem is the first and with the last ones He will be the same

a hint of Bob Dylan's 1962 [*Blowing in the Wind*](#):

*How many roads must a man walk down
Before you call him a man?
How many seas must a white dove sail
Before she sleeps in the sand?*

*Yes, and how many times must the cannonballs fly
Before they're forever banned?*

*The answer, my friend, is blowing' in the wind
The answer is blowing' in the wind*

As Gabriella puts it: “The miraculous and hazardous life’s roads traveled in the past, now present and future generations by Hebrew, Israelites, and Jewish souls, **Verse 4 says it all.**”

And, second, Warren Stern has a great entry for **Haftarah Lech Lecha**, taken from the same verses that Eric Liddle read during his sermon in *Chariots of Fire*:

- [He Will Give the Weary Strength](#), here by Ellie Holcomb

Haftarah Vayeira follows **Parashat Vayeira** in fundamental and beautiful respects. The parasha includes the visit by the three angels who are shown kindness by Abra[ha]m and Sarai/h; the haftarah includes visits from the Prophet Elisha who is shown kindness by the Shunammite woman. The parasha includes the promise of a child, as does the haftarah. And the parasha includes miracles aplenty (Lot lives; Isaac is born and then lives, to name a few), as does the haftarah (cornucopian flowing of oil; reviving the dead child).

The song list for **Haftarah Vayeira** makes itself! Jay Harwitt suggests:

- [We're Off to See the Wizard](#) (Jay calls this haftarah *The Boy Scout Handbook Haftarah*, since Elisha is always prepared)

Michael Lewyn, observing that the haftarah ends “with the woman's son waking up”, suggests the great Al Jolson classic:

- [When The Red Red Robin Comes Bob Bob Bobbin' Along](#)

And Warren Stern likes:

- [Waiting for a Miracle](#), here by The Jerry Garcia Band

Andrew Druck is also stuck on a miracles theme:

- [Do You Believe in Magic?](#) as sung by the Lovin' Spoonful
- [Magical Mystery Tour](#), as sung by the Beatles
- [Miracles](#), as sung by Jefferson Starship
- [Magic](#), as sung by Pilot
- [I Put a Spell on You](#), here by CCR
- [Counting on a Miracle](#), as sung by Bruce Springsteen

Study Being Its Own Reward. I tried to prove this last week, from the Talmud's text. Claude Nadaf isn't buying. Says he: "There's no reward in learning but in practice as per Joshua 1:7-9". The verses are marvelous, but do they prove Claude's point? Decide for yourself:

רק חזק ואמץ מאד לשמר לעשות ככל-התורה אשר צוה משה עבדי אל-תסור ממנו ימין ושמאול למען תשכיל בכל אשר תלך: לא-ימוש ספר-התורה הזה מפיד והגית בו יומם ולילה למען תשמר לעשות ככל-הפיתוב בו כי-אז תצליח את-דרכך ואז תשכיל: הלא צויתיה חזק ואמץ אל-תצרץ ואל-תחנת כי עמך יהיה אלהיך בכל אשר תלך:

7 Only be strong and very courageous, to observe and to do according to all the Torah that My servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may act wisely wherever you go.

8 This book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it; for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall act wisely.

9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

Talmudic Logical Reasoning as its Best. This week, the global daf yomi learning cycle is studying pages 49-55 of Tractate Zevachim. The dialogue on pages 50a-51 deserves unpacking.

Based on Biblical sources and Talmudic examples, the Talmud is comfortable stating that, in general – meaning *not* in the world of *kodshim* or sacrifices – deriving a legal rule from what is itself a derived rule is often permissible. The question in *these* pages is whether that double derivative rule is valid in the world of *kodshim* or sacrifices. The Talmud is not in love with double derivatives in *this* context. But rather than announce a general rule, the gemarra identifies four of the prevalent types of logical inference used in Talmudic thinking. Then, for each of those four, the gemarra asks whether combinations of those four with others of those four constitutes a usable or unusable double derivative.

To be more specific, there are four modes of reasoning that the Talmud uses a lot. Here is how Rabbi Steinsaltz is said to explain the four:

1. **Hekesh (Analogy/Juxtaposition):** A legal analogy drawn when two subjects are mentioned together or in adjacent passages in the Torah, implying they share similar laws.
2. **Gezeirah Shavah (Verbal Analogy):** An inference made when the same specific word or phrase appears in two different, unrelated parts of the Torah, implying that a law stated explicitly in one case applies to the other case as well.
3. **Kal Vaḥomer (A Fortiori Inference):** A logical argument from the lenient to the stringent, or vice-versa (if a certain law applies in a case where leniency is expected, it certainly applies in a more stringent case).

4. ***Binyan Av* (Interpretation based on a Paradigm/Master Principle):** Building a general rule from examples.

Using each of those four, the Talmud methodically goes through a 4x4 matrix, or 16 possibilities, and in each case brings proofs from other places in the Talmud – or from Biblical passages – to prove whether double inferences from any of these 16 possibilities is valid. So for example, if one has already made a *kal vahomer* inference from a main proposition, can one double derivative from that inference by use of a straightforward type of inference (*binyan av*) and determine law on that basis? Some double derivatives appear to be allowed, even in the world of *kodshim*. By my count, many (most?) are not.

The point of this exegesis is not so much what specific rules are arrived at. Rather, my point is two-fold: First, I'm not sure that any double-derivating is sound in a legal system involving potentially serious punishment. And, second, what is on display in these pages is a logical reasoning *tour de force*! Try to read through the pages — you will be rewarded.

Twain for the 250th. Aura Bijou is also game to form a book club to read Twain this year. But *the two of us*, though a great Beatles [song](#), does not a book club make. Michael Schulder, who got us into this, is warming to the idea. Any other takers?

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