



Ask The Rabbi...

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Issue #65

This issue is dedicated in the memory of Shalom Simcha Steinlauf Z"l

- This edition contains:
1. Spousal Abuse – A Torah Perspective
 2. Correcting a *Bracha* on the (Pepperidge®) Farm
 3. Answer to Last Week's Riddle, *Baruch Hashem*

Jennifer Weiss <jdweiss@strauss.udel.edu> wrote:

I attend a synagogue at my university. Last Friday, the Rabbi and a couple of us were discussing the possibility of spousal abuse within the Orthodox community. Some people said that it never happens, but my guess is that it does happen, though not as frequently as in non-observant homes. What is the truth?

Dear Jennifer,

Spousal respect is one of the Torah's most central ideas. While society at large applauds the likes of Rambo, Ninja Turtles and the Simpson family, our models are Abraham and Sara and the home they built together.

The Rambam describes how a man should act toward his wife: "The Sages demand that a man honor his wife **more than himself**, and love her as himself...He should spend money for her good...He should speak to her gently, and not act depressed or angry."

The Torah forbids striking people. Even someone who lifts a threatening hand is considered wicked. Rabbi Eliezar Pupo, writing 180 years ago in Turkey, calls upon city leaders to do whatever they can to curb interpersonal violence:

"And especially," he writes "those people, lacking all self-control, who batter their spouses...who treat **Women of Israel** like slaves, trampling, beating, and having no shame. Anyone with the power should inflict the **harshest possible punishment** upon them, and help the woman obtain a divorce if she so desires — Because a woman cannot live together with a snake. It is a tremendous **Mitzva** to save the victim from the hand of the oppressor."

I don't know of any exact statistics of spousal abuse in the Orthodox society. But, let me tell you the following story:

The *Chafetz Chaim* once testified on behalf of a yeshiva student entangled in the Polish judicial system. To bolster the credibility of his witness in the judge's eyes, the defense attorney told the following story: A thief once stole from the Chafetz Chaim, and the Chafetz Chaim ran after him shouting, "I forgive you! I forgive you!"

"Do you really believe that?" the judge asked.

"No," said the lawyer. "But Your Honor -- do they tell stories like that about **you and me?**"

While there may be an exceptional case in the Orthodox community, the stories of spousal abuse are few and far between.

Sources:

- Rambam, *Hilchot Ishut* 15:19.
- Tractate Sanhedrin 58b.
- *Pele Yoetz*, Ot 'Heh' - "Haca'ah."

Cliff @aol.com wrote,

Dear Rabbi,

After I ate an entire bag of Pepperidge Farm® Milano™ cookies, I accidentally said 'Borei Nefashot' instead of 'Al HaMichiya.' What should I do now?

Dear Cliff,

As you know, the *bracha* of *shehakol* is a "catch-all" *bracha* that suffices for all foods *bedieved* (post facto). There is a common misconception that the same holds true for "*Borei Nefashot*" --- that it is an all-encompassing after-*bracha* which suffices for all foods. According to the Mishna Brurah, this is not true. If you still feel the "satisfying effect" of those cookies, you say "*Al HaMichiya*." If you have since become hungry, you can no longer recite an after-*bracha*. I assume that this is the case here, despite the speed of e-mail!

Sources:

- *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chaim* 208:62.

Answer to last week's riddle:

Question: Which three people mentioned in the Torah said "*Baruch Hashem?*"

Answer: Noach, Eliezar the servant of Avraham, and Yitro (*Bereshit* 9:26, 24:27, *Shmot* 18:10). Lavan said *B'ruch Hashem* (with a *Shvah*), meaning Blessed of Hashem (*Bereshit* 24:31). Avimelech and Phichol also said *B'ruch Hashem* in *Bereshit* 26:29. Stephen Phillips (stephenp@cix.compulink.co.uk) sent in the above correct answer.

If you have E-Mail and a question, you can submit it to Ask The Rabbi for possible inclusion in a future edition. Just write your question using your E-Mail program, set the subject to "Ask The Rabbi" and send it to ohr@jer1.co.il. We can't include all questions submitted, but we do try to respond to everyone.

Ask The Rabbi is written by **Rabbi Benzion Bamberger, Rabbi Reuven Subar** and various other Rabbis at Ohr Somayach Institutions / Tanenbaum College, Jerusalem, Israel.

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