



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

This Issue Contains:

1. Getting Personal
2. Letters to Heaven
3. Answer to Yiddle Riddle



Carol Brown <Paul_Brown@nynet.nybe.north-york.on.ca> Wrote:

I was told that a person isn't supposed to ask Hashem for personal requests on Shabbat. Is the reason so that we won't have sad thoughts on Shabbat? How far does this rule extend? For example, I have a particular prayer for an errant child which I say every other day. Is it really not appropriate to say it on Shabbat?

< Saydee613@aol.com > wrote:

When a woman lights Shabbat candles, she davens over them, beseeching Hashem. Isn't this in contradiction of not asking Hashem for things on Shabbat?

Dear Carol Brown and Saydee613,

On Shabbat, it's inappropriate to pray for personal needs. Focusing on what you lack is apt to cause worry and distress, contrary to the spirited, festive atmosphere which should reign on Shabbat.

I discussed this issue with Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch, *shlita*. He explained that that this prohibition is limited to physical needs. Praying for spiritual needs, however, is permitted. Praying for an errant child is considered a spiritual need.

Sources:

- Tractate Shabbat 12a.
- Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch, *shlita*, senior member of the Jerusalem *Beit Din Tzedek (Badatz)*, and author of many important halachic works.

Neil Parks <nparks@torah.org> from Beachwood, Ohio wrote:

I've noticed the Hebrew letters "Bet Samech Daled" on the top of many web pages. What does it stand for? (I presume they're not trying to tell you what brand of Unix it's running on.)

Dear Neil,

The letters stand for **B'Siyata D'Shmaya**. It's Aramaic, and it means "with the help of Heaven." By the way, a number of years ago I asked the Steipler Rav (Rabbi Yaakov Kanievsky, *zatzal*) which is better to write at the top of a note or letter: 'Bet Samech Daled' or 'Bet Heh' (*Baruch Hashem*)? He answered that "Many people use the Aramaic expression instead of the Hebrew because it avoids writing one of the letters of Hashem's holy name (*Heh*) on something which might be thrown out."

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein states that writing 'Daled' — although a reference to Heaven — is not a letter of Hashem's name, unlike the letter 'Heh.'

Source:

- Igrot Moshe, Yoreh De'ah 2:138

Yiddle Riddle:

Last week we asked: When is a non-*kohen* called first to the Torah in the presence of *kohanim*?

Answer: When he is the only non-*kohen* present.

Ordinarily, the first person called to the Torah is a '*kohen*' — a descendant of Aharon. After the *kohen*, a '*levi*' is called. The third person honored to go up to read the Torah is a '*yisrael*' — someone who is neither a *kohen* nor a *levi*.

But if everyone in the synagogue is a *kohen*, with the exception of one non-*kohen*, the non-*kohen* is called first.

Since the Torah's "paths are pleasantness, and all its ways are peace," it's fitting to have a systematic way to decide who will be honored first. This will preempt any ill-will or argument which might otherwise arise. (*Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 135:12*)

Speaking of arguing in synagogue: A young scholar from New York was invited to become Rabbi in a small old community in Chicago. On his very first Shabbat, a hot debate erupted as to whether one should or should not stand during the reading of the Ten Commandments.

Next day, the rabbi visited 98 year-old Mr. Katz in the nursing home. "Mr. Katz, I'm asking you as the oldest member of the community," said the rabbi, "what is our synagogue's custom during the reading of the Ten Commandments?"

"Why do you ask?" asked Mr. Katz.

"Yesterday we read the Ten Commandments. Some people stood, some people sat. The ones standing started screaming at the ones sitting, telling them to stand up. The ones sitting started screaming at the ones standing, telling them to sit down..."

"That," said the old man "is our custom."

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Issue #133 - 3 January 1997 - Shmos

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