



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

This Issue Contains:

1. Braided Bunch
2. PaRDeS
3. Yiddle Riddle



Alison < mershjam@usaor.net > wrote:

Dear Rabbi:

Every Friday I make Challah for Shabbat. When asked why I braid them, I had no answer! What is the historical/traditional significance to braiding Challah?

Roi Levine Garcia < roigar@aol.com > wrote:

In the Torah portion we read about the Challah, the bread of Shabbat. What is the significance of the intertwining of the bread to make it Challah?

Dear Alison & Roi Levine Garcia,

I have heard several reasons for braiding *Challot* for Shabbat. The three braids are symbolic of the commands to observe Shabbat that appear in the Ten Commandments. One braid represents the word "*Zachor*" — "Remember." A second braid represents the word "*Shamor*" — "Guard." The third braid is for "*b'Dibbur Echad*" — that these commands of "Remember" and "Guard" were said by G-d simultaneously and as one unit.

Another reason is that Shabbat signifies and reminds us of three different concepts: The Creation of the World, the Exodus from Egypt and the Messianic Era. This is also the reason for three distinct separate *Amidot* — Silent Prayers — on Shabbat, as opposed to the weekday *Amidah* which is of identical wording three times a day (the theme of the fourth prayer of Shabbat — *Mussaf* ("additional") is said for the additional Temple sacrifice for Shabbat, and also applies on Festivals.) This idea also provides an understanding for the three meals eaten on Shabbat.

By the way, the "*Challah*" mentioned in the Torah is not referring to the *Challah* that we eat on Shabbat and Yom Tov. (See Ask the Rabbi Issue #165 for a critique of this comment.) It refers to the command to separate a small amount of the dough that one kneads when baking bread. In Temple times this portion of dough (called "*Challah*" by the Torah) was given to the *Kohanim*, the priestly tribe, who were responsible for the Temple service. Today there is a rabbinical command to separate "*Challah*" from the dough and burn it, since in order to eat it there is a requirement for the *Kohanim* and the *Challah* to be ritually pure — a state that does not presently exist.

Brian Levitan < blevitan@cisco.com > wrote:

Could you please give a simple explanation with examples, of the levels of textual interpretation, referred to as PARDES. (*Pshat*, *Remez*, *Drush*, *Sod*.)

Dear Brian Levitan,

Let's take the first verse of the Torah as our example:

1. *Pshat* — simplest meaning, based on the text and context. Rashi explains that *pshat* of the verse as follows: "In the beginning of God's creation of the heaven and the earth, the earth was desolate and void." This is based on a linguistic analysis of the word "*Bereshit*," which does not mean "In the beginning", but "In the beginning of..."
2. *Remez* — "hint." The Gaon of Vilna taught that all commands of the Torah are hinted at in the first word of the Torah. For instance, *Pidyon Haben* — redemption of the first-born — is alluded to by an acronym of the letters of *Bereshit*, which spell "*ben rishon acharei shloshim yom tifdeh*" — the first son you shall redeem after thirty days.
3. *Drush* — contextual and non-contextual, moral and philosophical explanations. Rashi states that there is a philosophical idea alluded to in the word "*Bereshit*." The world was created for the sake of Torah which is called "*reshit*," and for the Jewish people who are also referred to as "*reshit*." Both are "firsts" in terms of their centrality in the purpose of Creation.
4. *Sod* — hidden or secret meaning. Mishna: "The world was created with ten statements." Gemara: "But when you count them there are only nine statements! *Bereshit* (In the beginning) is also a statement." The statement of "*Bereshit*" was the creation of time, which is a dimension of the physical world. One of the names of G-d is "*Hamakom*" — "The Place" — as the Midrash explains that "He is the place of the world, the world is not His place." This concept is based on the idea that the physical world would not exist if not for G-d willing it to exist at every moment. Therefore G-d is the "Place" of the world, meaning the framework of reality in which everything exists, and He provides the possibility of existence to all of Creation. The dimension of Time and the laws of nature were created during the six days of Creation. The Sforno, The Gaon of Vilna, the Maharal, and Maimonides, all basing themselves on the Talmud, state that the hidden meaning of the word "In the Beginning" — *Bereshit* — is the creation of what we today call "the space-time continuum."

Sources:

- Ethics of the Fathers 5:1; Babylonian Talmud Tractate Megillah 21b
- Gaon of Vilna in Aderet Eliyahu, *Bereshit* 1:1; Maharal of Prague
- Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin, *Nefesh Hachaim*
- Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed* 2:30 (13th Century)

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Ask The Rabbi is written by Rabbi Moshe Lazerus, Rabbi Reuven Lauffer, Rabbi Reuven Subar, Rabbi Avrohom

General Editor: **Rabbi Moshe Newman**

Lefkowitz, Rabbi Mordechai Becher and other Rabbis at Ohr Somayach Institutions / Tanenbaum College, Jerusalem, Israel.

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22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103, Jerusalem Israel

972-2-581-0315

ohr@virtual.co.il

38 East 29th Street 8th floor, New York, NY 10016, USA

1-212-213-3100

972-2-581-2890

RZCorlin@aol.com or estern@aol.com

613 Clark Avenue West, Thornhill, Ontario L4J 5V3, Canada

1-905-886-5730

1-212-213-8717

Somayach@MSN.com

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This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect. Do not let this land on a garbage heap.

Yiddle Riddle

Ralph Zwierr" <zwierr@netlink.com.au> of Double Z Computer sent us this riddle:


We all know that you must nullify *chametz* prior to Pesach at a time when it is still permissible to derive benefit from it, because when the *chametz* becomes totally prohibited, the Torah withdraws a person's ownership of it and the person can no longer nullify it.

Under what circumstances would a person be able to make an effective statement of nullification **during** Pesach, which will enable him to avoid transgressing the strict prohibition on owning *chametz*?

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General Editor: **Rabbi Moshe Newman**


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 22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103, Jerusalem Israel

 972-2-581-0315


fax: 972-2-581-2890


 ohr@virtual.co.il


 38 East 29th Street 8th floor, New York, NY 10016, USA

 1-212-213-3100


fax: 1-212-213-8717

 RZCorlin@aol.com or estern@Aol.com

 613 Clark Avenue West, Thornhill, Ontario L4J 5V3, Canada

 1-905-886-5730

fax: 1-905-886-6065

 Somayach@MSN.com

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