



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem



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Parashat Noach

This Issue Contains:

1. Shalom By-Us
2. Wayward Daughter
3. Meat and Potatoes
4. Chosen People?
5. Public Domain
6. Yiddle Riddle

Dear Readers: This week starts the fifth cycle of Ohr Somayach's "Ask the Rabbi." Originally, "Ask the Rabbi" consisted of one rabbi answering the few questions which trickled in each week. **Four years and over fifty thousand questions later**, our team of rabbis answers more than one hundred questions daily which pour in from all over the globe.

"Ask the Rabbi" replies to each and every person who writes in. Most people receive a personal answer to their question **within 48 hours**. Often, you will be answered the same day! Besides answering everyone personally, we select a few questions and publish them in our weekly "Ask the Rabbi" column. By popular demand, we are expanding the "Ask the Rabbi" column to allow for greater diversity of subject matter. We're also introducing a new feature called **"THE PUBLIC DOMAIN"** to encourage feedback from you!

The Ohr Somayach Rabbis

[Name withheld] wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

What is more important: Shalom Bayit — harmony in the home — or mitzvah observance? Neither I nor my wife were raised observant, but a few years ago I decided that I wanted to become more observant. Our children, who have always attended Jewish day school, also were in favor of this. My wife was not altogether opposed to the idea, but wanted to move very slowly. She has become more observant (i.e., keeping Shabbat, stricter kosher) but is reluctant to change any more.

Unfortunately, I began moving too quickly and problems soon arose. In the meantime 3 years have passed and we have had some very difficult times; our marriage nearly ended several times. My wife has asked me to back off several times, but I find it difficult to "undo" certain mitzvah observances once I have undertaken them (i.e., kippah, tzitzit). Because of her unwillingness to conform with the rest of the family, she now has a very strong resentment for Orthodox Judaism, and believes it is "too demanding." When Yom Tov approaches, especially like this year when we had two days of Yom Tov followed immediately by Shabbat, she gets in a state of depression.

To keep our marriage together I feel that I have to undo what I have done. This, however, presents a terrible inner conflict because I do not wish to transgress Torah law. We have been to counseling, but nothing has ever come out of it. Also, I have told my wife that she is free to do whatever she is comfortable with, and I will not think less of her. She feels, though, that she has become an outcast in the family and that she is the "bad guy" while I get to be the "good guy" by observing the Torah along with our children. I love my wife, but I also fear Hashem. What should I do? Thank You!

Dear [Name withheld],

From your question it sounds like you're putting "Harmony in the home" on one side of a scale, and "Torah observance" on the other side. This is incorrect: Harmony in the Jewish home is *itself* a fundamental pillar of Torah observance.

Therefore, you need to discuss each issue — *kippah, tzitzit, Yom Tov, etc.* — with a competent Halachic authority. Preferably someone with whom you and your wife feel comfortable and open. May Hashem grant you and your wife the strength to overcome your difficulties and to approach the New Year with renewed commitment to each other and to the Torah.

[Name withheld] wrote:

My name is [withheld]. I am 8 years old. I have a question. In Parashat Ki Tavo, we read about the ben sorer u'moreh, the wayward son. Why isn't there a 'bat' sorer u'moreh, a wayward daughter?

Dear [name withheld],

What a great question! Maimonides, in his classic work "Mishneh Torah" addresses this question. He explains that a *ben sorer u'moreh*, a youth who steals and gorges himself on meat and wine, will eventually commit robbery and even murder in order to satisfy his desires. A woman, says

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Ask The Rabbi is written by Rabbi Moshe Lazerus, Rabbi Reuven Lauffer, Rabbi Reuven Subar, Rabbi Avrohom Lefkowitz, Rabbi Mordechai Becher and other Rabbis at Ohr Somayach Institutions / Tanenbaum College, Jerusalem, Israel.

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Maimonides, is less likely to sink to the level where she will actually commit robbery and murder.

Sources:

- Rambam, Hilchot Mamrim 7:11

ALAN SAUER < dum-dum@interactiva. cl > from Chile

Dear Rabbi? What happens if I cook potatoes in a pan that I usually use for cooking meat in? Do I have to wait six hours like if I had eaten beef?

Dear Alan Sauer,

If you eat food that is *parve* — neither milk nor meat — which was cooked using clean “meat” utensils, you don't need to wait six hours before eating milk foods. Likewise, *parve* foods cooked in clean dairy utensils may be eaten immediately after meat.

Sources:

- Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah, Rema 89:3

Ahmad Faiz bin Abdul Rahman from Malaysia < afaiz@ikim.gov.my > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

According to the Talmud, have the Jews been chosen to exercise control and authority over the life and property of non-Jewish people? Would this not be in utter contradistinction of the liberal notion of the political and civil liberties of the individual, something which is considered especially important in Western liberal thought and tradition? Are the Jews superior to non-Jews? If so, how does one begin to qualify this so that it would not be viewed as racist and bigoted? I have referred to Muslim professors of comparative religious studies on such matters. They have given the mainstream Muslim ideas or beliefs on what the Talmud says of non-Jews. I would now like to know the Jewish view of such matters so that my research will be balanced. Wassalam.

Ahmad Faiz bin Abdul Rahman
Research Officer, IKIM

Dear Ahmad Faiz bin Abdul Rahman,

Jews have not been chosen to control other nations. Rather, we have been chosen to act as an example of morality for the nations of the world and to instruct them in the teachings of ethical monotheism.

As G-d states in the Torah:

“Now, if you obey Me and keep My covenant, you shall be My special treasure among all the nations...”

“And you shall be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation...”

“G-d has similarly declared allegiance to you today, making you His special nation... you are called the priests of G-d, the servants of the Almighty...”

The emphasis, as you can clearly see, is on being *priests*. Priests are not rulers or kings; rather they are teachers and examples.

Sources:

- Exodus 19:3,6
- Deuteronomy 4:20, 26:17-19
- Isaiah 61:6

New Feature !

THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

Comments, quibbles, and reactions concerning previous “Ask-the-Rabbi” features.

Kabbalistically (I think) it is ideal to have twelve challot (I don't know why). Some Chassidim do this. German Jews do not braid, but make a regular loaf and then stretch a line of dough from tip to tip. I've heard this is a letter 'vav' which equals 6. Both challot together make twelve. Oh! I just realized as I'm writing! Twelve is reminiscent of the 12 “lechem hapanim” — the “show breads” offered on Shabbat in the Beit Hamikdash. Now it all comes together!

Daniel Loew, Yeshiva University
< dloew@ymail.yu.edu >

One would understand from your words that our present usage of the word “challah” is not linguistically biblical. I would point out that the word challah in the Torah and Tanach always means “loaf” or “roll” and it appears many times not in connection with mitzvah of “separating challah” from the dough. Check a concordance.

Doivid Solomon < solomons@mail.netvision.net.il >

Your answer was interesting but smacked of being after the fact. I always thought that the braids were there to make it easier to distribute the bread to the participants as quickly as possible, for those who break the bread by hand. Don't some people have a custom to avoid knives at the table?

Edward Simon < esimon@bilbo.bio.purdue.edu >

Yiddle Riddle

Shira Aliza Phillips from Brooklyn, New York < philfam@erols.com > wrote us the following:

I have a Yiddle Riddle for you, as told to me by Mora Vered Goldfarb: Of which two people in the Torah can it be said that their names spelled backwards are words used by the Torah to describe them?

Answer next week...