



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

This Issue Contains:

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OHR SOMAYACH תנוח טאנענבאום קאלעדזש
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Parashat Vayeitzei

[Name and email Withheld] wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I am a New York City Police Detective in a South Bronx precinct. Part of my duties include "interview interrogation" of people who have been arrested for felonious (usually violent) crimes. Before this process I read the suspect his Miranda warnings, if the suspect agrees to talk to me I then attempt to obtain a written confession from him. I do this by feigning sympathy and understanding thereby gaining his confidence. I never make false promises, threats or use violence. The person usually leaves the room shaking my hand and thinking that I'm his friend. Basically what I am doing is misleading and disingenuous, although legal. Afterwards, although I have obtained a confession from a violent felon, I can't help but feel guilty, it's like I've gained someone's trust and betrayed them. Do you think that my guilt feelings are justified? (If you hear from any Israeli detectives with similar experiences I would enjoy corresponding with them.)

Dear [Name and email Withheld],

I've read your letter many times and each time I am struck by your extraordinary sensitivity.

There is absolutely no Halachic problem with building a relationship with someone in order to be able to right a wrong. However, this is on condition that the suspect is neither promised something that you can't deliver, or coerced into making a confession. Even if it is perfectly clear that he is guilty of a crime, it's forbidden to use physical force or verbal threats to have him admit it. May Hashem grant you the ability to carry on with your important work and retain your acute sensitivity.

Judith Amrani from Houston, Texas <amrju@gardere.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

We always kiss the mezuzah upon leaving our home. I am notorious for forgetting things and have to go back into the house again. My question is: Should I kiss the mezuzah again upon (finally) leaving? Thanks!
PS I like your newly expanded e-mails.

Dear Judith Amrani,

It's a widespread custom to kiss the *mezuzah* when leaving home, but once is probably enough. Actually, the custom is to touch the *mezuzah* with your hand and then kiss your hand. The *Shulchan Aruch* mentions the custom to touch the *mezuzah* and to pray for Hashem to watch over you. It seems like Hashem is watching over you, since after you kiss the *mezuzah* you always remember that you forgot something you need!

Sources:

- Yoreh Deah, 285:2, Rema
- Ibid. Birkei Yosef

Forgetting reminds me: A man tells his psychiatrist: "Doctor, I can't remember anything! I forgot what happened yesterday, I forgot what my car looks like, I can't even remember my own name."

Doctor: How long have you had this problem?

Man: What problem?

Basil Hyde Johannesburg, S. Africa <herbert@netactive.co.za> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

It seems that there might be some connection between the 40 days and 40 nights of the Flood followed by the rainbow and the 40 days and 40 nights that Moses spent on Sinai followed by the golden calf. Do you know of any such connection made by any of the Rabbis of earlier times? Thank you for a most absorbing and interesting series of Q & A's.

Kathryn Parks, Sweeny, Texas <kjp1939@tgn.net> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

My name is Kathryn and my Sunday School class is studying Noah and the flood. We were wondering what the significance of the number forty is in that G-d caused it to rain forty days and nights? Why forty? Thank you so much for any help you might give us.

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@virtual.co.il. Or use our form at <http://www.ohr.org.il/ask/page/ask.htm>. We can't include all questions submitted, but we do try to respond to everyone.

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.

General Editor: **Rabbi Moshe Newman**
Production Design: **Lev Seltzer**

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22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103, Jerusalem Israel
38 East 29th Street 8th floor, New York, NY 10016, USA
613 Clark Avenue West, Thornhill, Ontario L4J 5V3, Canada

972-2-581-0315
1-212-213-3100
1-905-886-5730

972-2-581-2890
1-212-213-8717
1-905-886-6065

ohr@virtual.co.il
RZCorlin@aol.com or estern@Aol.com
Somayach@MSN.com

Yiddle Riddle

Last week we wrote:

Here is a riddle I am submitting from my father-in-law Stanley Chazan and my daughter Aviva Stroh: "Name 6 couples mentioned in *Tanach* whose first names start with the same letter in Hebrew.

Jack Stroh, East Brunswick, NJ <jackst@erols.com>

Answer:

- Noach and Naama
- Esav and Adah
- Aharon and Elisheva
- Otniel ben Knaz and Achsah bat Kalev
- Achav and Izevel
- Esther and Achashveirosh

Dear Basil Hyde and Kathryn Parks,

We find the number 40 in several places in the Torah. 40 days of rain during the flood; Moses was on Mount Sinai 40 days receiving the Torah; the minimum amount of water required in a *mikveh* — ritual bath — is 40 *seah* (halachic measures). The Torah prescribes 40 lashes for some serious crimes. In addition, our Sages teach that a fetus takes 40 days from conception to develop into human form.

The Maharal of Prague, Rabbi Yehuda Loewe, explains that the number 40 always means cataclysmic change and new creation. The flood eradicated all trace of the terrible spiritual state that existed previously and created a new mankind. By receiving the Torah, the Jews were born as a new nation. One who is impure immerses in the *mikveh* and emerges as a new person who is pure. Lashes motivate the criminal to recreate himself spiritually and return to the ways of the Torah.

Our Sages teach that the world was created through ten Divine utterances. Mystically, each of these ten utterances manifests itself on four different levels, hence a total of forty. On Shabbat, we refrain from 39 categories of forbidden labor. The Talmud refers to these 39 as "forty minus one" because each one parallels one of the forty levels of creation, except for the highest level of creation — creation of something from absolute nothingness — which has no parallel in our physical world.

Eric Rosenberg <ERosenb510@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I was leading Shabbat services at a local Jewish nursing home and noticed that some of the congregants were visually impaired. When I came to the shemoneh esrei [silent prayer] I wasn't sure what to do — should I have read the shemoneh esrei out loud for those who cannot see well enough to read? (They didn't know the prayers by heart.) Also, I assume it was O.K. for people to sit who did not feel they had the strength to remain standing? Thank you.

Dear Eric Rosenberg,

As you know, after the congregation says the silent prayer, the Cantor repeats it out loud. This repetition of the *shemoneh esrei* is intended for exactly the situation you describe — to help the people who don't know the prayers by heart and can't read them. Therefore, here's what you should do in such a situation: Before the prayers, announce that anyone who has difficulty reading the prayers should listen carefully during the repetition. If possible, they should say the prayer along with you word for word, and if that's not possible they should just listen carefully to the entire prayer and say *amen* to each blessing.

As for sitting during prayer, you're right: A person who finds it a hardship to stand may sit during *shemoneh esrei*. By helping out in a nursing home you are doing a great mitzvah. Keep up the good work!

THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

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

Regarding "Ask the Rabbi" in which you wrote that Mount Sinai is called "Har Moriah -- Mountain of Teaching, where G-d taught Moses the Torah." Is this to be confused with the Mount Moriah that Avraham almost sacrificed Yitzchak on?

J&J Baldus <nabiydiy@artelco.com>

I think that Har Moriah is a name for Har Habayit and not for Har Sinai.

Ben Pashkoff <benj@netvision.net.il>

The Rabbi Responds:

Dear J&J Baldus and Ben Pashkoff,

The Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 1:8) states that one of the names of Mount Sinai was "Moriah." As you pointed out Moriah is also one of the names of the Temple Mount. Moriah means "the place where Hashem can be seen." When the Jewish People got the Torah, Mount Sinai was a place where Hashem's presence was manifest. After the Torah was given, Mount Sinai reverted to its previous, mundane status. The Temple Mount, however, remains the eternal place where Hashem's presence is most manifest.

Hi. I was the individual who asked the question about starting to study at the age of 37. You published my question and some great people wrote back with encouragement and gave me their email addresses. Unfortunately, my computer system went down and I lost their email addresses. Would you be so kind as to publish this so I can ask them to write back? Thanks.

David from Alaska <Haneve@hotmail.com>