



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

This Issue Contains:

1. The Writing in the Wall
2. Snoopy Snooze
3. Baby Trees
4. Phil & Thropic
5. Night Vision
6. Answer to Yiddle Riddle
7. Public Domain



THE WRITING IN THE WALL

Jeffrey J. Samoska < samoska_tea-time@snet.net > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I submit prayer requests to the Kotel (Western Wall) through Virtual Jerusalem's e-mail. I suppose there are hundreds of thousands of people bringing requests to the Wall every year. What happens to the requests that do not stay tucked into the Wall? If they fall onto the ground, are they swept up and disposed of in a religious ceremony? I don't imagine that all the requests would stay put for an indefinite period of time.

Dear Jeffrey J. Samoska,

Officially, the attendants at the Wall are supposed to make sure that all the papers that fall on the ground are replaced. About three years ago there was no more room for people to put their prayers into the cracks and crevices, so the Chief Rabbinate together with the Jerusalem municipality organized a team of volunteers to clean out all papers to make room for new prayers to be inserted. The papers that were removed were buried in accordance with Jewish Law.

SNOOPY SNOOZE

Name@Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

We are a Jewish couple with a two and a half year old "chewish" dog that is our only "child." She is very clean, very lovable and pretty well-behaved. My wife wants her to sleep in our room every night with us. I don't think it's appropriate. I think the bedroom should be private. What do you think?

Dear Name@Withheld,

It's difficult to give a definitive answer to a question about someone else's private affairs, especially since it doesn't only concern you, but it concerns a very important and

significant other (No! I don't mean your dog!). But I can offer my opinion.

I agree with you very strongly that your room should be a private place for husband and wife, and your "child" shouldn't be there (especially if above the age of Bark Mitzvah).

I suggest that, without causing any marital strife, you try to get your wife to agree to other arrangements for your "child." Perhaps you could make some kind of trade-off, like agreeing to spend some extra special time each day with the dog, e.g., reading to it, or helping it with its homework.

In dog terms, your child is over 17 years old, old enough to sleep by himself. Make him a really comfortable little spot he can call his own, and he'll be happy as a hound.

BABY TREES

Les Galler from Auckland, New Zealand < lesgall@xtra.co.nz > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Could you please tell me about the ancient practices regarding tree-planting and the birth of a son and a daughter?

Dear Les Galler,

In Talmudic times, when a boy was born they planted a cedar tree; when a girl was born they planted a pine tree. The poles of the wedding canopy were made out of the wood of the trees that were planted at the birth of the bride and groom.

Sources:

- Talmud Tractate Gittin 57a

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

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PHIL & THROPIC

Name@ Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
I recently gave money to a non-profit organization. When I heard that they publicly post the names of those who give to their organization, I asked (pursuant to Maimonides' principles of charity, as well as general modesty provisions) to have my contribution posted as an anonymous donor. When I suggested this however, the fund-raiser suggested that, for a variety of reasons, it was likely that having my name posted would result in some people giving who would not do so otherwise. For the time being I am listed as anonymous, what do you (and halacha) suggest?

Dear Name@Withheld,

As you wrote, a very lofty way of fulfilling the mitzvah of charity is to give anonymously. Of the eight levels listed in the Code of Jewish Law, this is the third highest level.

However, if a specific person's donation will serve as a source of motivation for others to donate, then it would be correct for the donor to allow the institution to advertise his donation.

If publicizing the donation will cause difficulty, then it shouldn't be done. For example, if advertising the donor's name will inundate him with appeals from charities that are beyond his means or interest, he shouldn't allow his name to be published.

Sources:

- Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 249:8,13
 - Ibid 248:7
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NIGHT VISION

Moshe Mayor from Brooklyn, New York
< 110605.2310@Compuserve.com > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

The Gemara (Berachot 55b) states: Rabbi Zeirah said "Whoever sleeps seven days without having a dream, is called a bad person." Do you have any suggestions what did Maharsha say on this?

Dear Moshe Mayor,

As you may have noticed, *Maharsha* doesn't expound on this statement. He cross-references the two places in Tractate *Berachot* where this statement appears.

Rashi explains the basic idea as follows: Dreams are sometimes Divine messages. Seven days without such a vision indicates that the person is unworthy of Heavenly communication.

The Vilna Gaon has a different explanation: Life is like a dream, ephemeral and fleeting. If a person senses this, he will focus on the eternal purpose of life — studying Torah and doing *mitzvot*. Someone who goes seven days without sensing that this world is like a temporary dream has lost sight of the real purpose of life.

Why seven? Because for six days a person is busy pursuing a livelihood. He can therefore be forgiven for losing sight of life's temporary nature. But if he goes seven days — *including Shabbat* — without focusing on spiritual pursuits, he has abandoned life's real purpose.

Sources:

- Berachot 14a Berachot 55b
- Thanks to Rabbi Mordecai Kornfeld

Yiddle Riddle

Last week we asked: Who was the first person to study Chumash with Rashi?

Submitted by Alan Frank from Jerusalem

Answer: Rashi's father!

THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

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

Re: Yiddle Riddle (Ohrnet Vaera) [atr#177]:

My name is Avi Rosner and I learn in the Mir Yeshiva here in Jerusalem. I'd seen Ohrnet around before, but just this week actually read it. It proved extremely insightful and informative. Your "Recommended Reading" list proved very helpful. I enjoyed the entire magazine greatly.

Regarding the Yiddle Riddle that Haran must have been the first to die after the Mabul: I enjoyed the proof but there may be one more possibility. The Rosh (Bereshet 7:23) says Og also saved his mother from the flood, who later gave birth to Sichon. Although Og and Sichon both outlived Haran, its quite possible their mother died before him. Thank you very much and tizku lemitzvos.

Avi Rosner, Jerusalem

I quite enjoyed your Yiddle Riddle about Haran. I am not sure, though, that I agree with the conclusion.

According to the solution offered, the Zohar would be saying that after the Mabul, until Haran nobody died before his father, when in fact until Haran nobody died AT ALL. This is like saying "Until Shaul, nobody from Shevet Binyamin was King of Israel," or "Until Bill Clinton, no US president named Clinton was elected to two terms." This does not seem to be a smooth reading of the Zohar.

In fact, the Vilna Gaon, cited as the basis of this reading, seems to hold that the events at Ur Kasdim occurred when Avraham was 70, 12 years after Noach died. This would make Noach, not Haran, the first to die after the Mabul (unless Noach's wife died first, which is possible even according to your answer).

The Nitzotzai Oros suggests that the Zohar means that Haran was the first to die in front of his father. Then it would be totally unclear who died first after the Mabul.

Menachem Diamond < 73132.766@compuserve.com >

Re: Hoo Flung Chow? (Ohrnet Vaera [atr #177])

In "Public Domain," it was pointed out that the Chicago Rabbinical Council gives kashrus certification to non Jewish owned restaurants which are open on Shabbos.

The proof was from Dunkin Donuts. True, the Dunkin Donuts is open on Shabbos and a mashgiach does not "pop" in during Shabbos (only on motzei Shabbos) even though it is located in the center of the religious neighborhood. The CRC policy is NOT to give a hechsher to a restaurant owned by a non-Jew which is open on Shabbos.

But, since Dunkin Donut is a franchise, which has very strict restrictions about only using franchise accepted ingredients/products, and since franchise rules require they open on Shabbos, and since it's more like a bakery whose ingredients do not require full time supervision, the CRC allows them to remain open on Shabbos without supervision.

Yerachmiel Askotzky < stamnet@netmedia.net.il >

Strike One for Ohrnet:

I just want to tell you how much I enjoy **Ohrnet**. It really adds to Shabbos. A few weeks ago when the post office was on strike in Israel I was unable to receive it, and I really missed it. Keep up the good work.

Mrs C. Zelasko

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