



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

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SIR NAME

Leif Manson from Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, Canada <leif.manson@nt.sympatico.ca> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

My mother is Jewish, my father is Scottish from a clan that protected the Jews during the crusades. He disappeared when I was quite young. Years later he reappeared after he had inherited a Scottish title of nobility, "the Laird of Leckie," and converted to reform Judaism. Do I have any responsibility towards this position or should I abdicate on the grounds that I am Jewish?

Dear Leif Manson,

There's no reason in Jewish law why you shouldn't accept the title of "Laird of Leckie." Righteous Jews throughout history have held titles of honor in non-Jewish society. Joseph was the titled viceroy of Egypt, and Mordechai was the viceroy of Persia. Others include the Count of Coucie, Shmuel Hanagid and Don Yitzchak Abarbanel. In fact, England's Chief Rabbi Emeritus, Rabbi Dr. Immanuel Jacobovitz, is today a member of England's House of Lords.

But keep in mind that inheriting a title often obligates the inheritor to pay large taxes on the estate. So carefully weigh the pros and the cons before accepting it, and perhaps consult with a lawyer.

WISHING WELL

Name@Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I seem to remember that if you meet or find out that someone is pregnant, you're not supposed to wish them "mazel tov" and there is another phrase that you use instead. Could you tell me what that phrase is? PS Love the column!

Dear Name@Withheld,

The phrase is "B'sha'a tova u'mutzlachat" which means "It should be at a good and propitious time." "Mazel Tov" is

usually said upon hearing something joyous which has taken place. "B'sha'a tova u'mutzlachat" is usually said for an impending good, one which one hopes will happen, but which hasn't happened yet.

BIRDS VS. BILLY RUBIN

Carol Brown <Paulbro@pathcom.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

We use Echinacea (pronounced eckinaysha), a natural extract of flowers, in liquid form, to prevent or reduce effects of colds and flu. It has become a very popular remedy and preventative, and we find it to be very helpful. We don't take it on a regular basis, only when we feel the onset of a cold (e.g., raw or dry throat, sniffles, etc.) or when someone else in the family has a cold or flu. Echinacea boosts the immune system so the body can naturally fight off the infection. Is one allowed to use this on Shabbos?

Also, we are told that there is a mystical kind of treatment for hepatitis in Israel involving placing pigeons on the abdomen of the patient. The pigeons somehow absorb the toxins from the patient's body and die. I would like to know the origin and validity of this treatment.

Dear Carol Brown,

Any substance that is eaten only for medicinal purposes, either as a preventative or therapeutic medicine, may not be taken on Shabbat unless the sickness is one of the following: a) Life threatening; b) Affecting the entire body; c) Severe pain; d) Affecting the eyes.

There is a Jerusalem tradition for the treatment of hepatitis in which a pigeon is placed on the patient's navel and the pigeon dies. Generally, this has been known to be a successful method of reducing bilirubin count in patients. As far as I know, this method has never been subjected to double-blind studies under controlled conditions, so it has no significant statistical basis. However, it has very strong hearsay evidence.

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 info@ohr.org.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.

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Sources:

- Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 328

TOGETHER ALONE

Name@Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I am a college girl and I work for an Orthodox health care professional. I was wondering if the laws of *yichud* [the prohibition of a man and woman being together in private] apply in the workplace. I am asking because all day long the front door to the office is open and patients come through; however, as soon as the last patient leaves, my employer locks the office door. Is it halachically wrong? If it is wrong, and I suspect it is, is there a respectful way to tell him about this? Any advice that you could pass along would be greatly appreciated.

Dear Name@Withheld,

You're right. If the door is locked, then there is a prohibition of *yichud*, even if both people are religious Jews. *Yichud* is not so much a matter of suspicion, but rather it is an independent prohibition. The intimacy of being alone together in a private place is reserved only for husband and wife. In fact, part of the marriage ceremony is the *cheder yichud*, the privacy room, where the bride and groom go to be alone together for the first time.

As for telling him without hurting his feelings, I suggest that you not tell him, but rather ask him about it. For example, you could mention that you were reading a book about the subject and it appeared that your situation is prohibited. You could ask, "Do you know about this issue? It seems pretty easy to avoid, we just leave the door open a little, right?" For sources on the subject I suggest the book *Halichos Bas Yisrael*.

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF PSALMS?

Julie Lupas from Toronto, Ontario

< Lupas@ecf.utoronto.ca > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

How could King David have written "Shir Hama'alot" if it describes the Jewish return to Israel which happened long after his time?

Dear Julie Lupas,

Excellent question. The Psalms, written by King David, describe events that happened long after David lived. Here's another example: In Psalm 137, King David describes the destruction of the Second Temple. He even names the nation, Edom (Rome), which is to destroy it. How can this be?

The answer is really very simple. Starting with Moshe and ending around the beginning of the Second Temple, the Jewish Nation enjoyed a period of prophecy. King David was one of the many prophets among the Jewish Nation during that period. We find the phrase "As G-d said to David" several times in the written Torah. King David wrote Psalms using his prophetic abilities.

Sources:

- Kings I 8:19
- Talmud Tractate Gittin 57b

Yiddle Riddle

What is the explanation of the following?
"Shmini B'Shmini Shmini Shmini"

Answer next week...

You can submit your questions to
Ask The Rabbi
with your web browser from the page:

www.AskTheRabbi.org

Or if you want to use e-mail, address it to: info@ohr.org.il

THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

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

Re: What is the origin of the word *pareve* (Ohrnet Vayakhel/Pekudei):

I, too, struggled for a long time to find the actual meaning and source for the word "pareve;" until, in desperation, I turned to my neighbor in shul with whom I converse in Yiddish (only when appropriate, of course). He suggested that the Yiddish word for a "pair" and for the verb "to pair" or "combine" is "porr" — in its Germanic pronunciation: "parr." The Yiddish suffix "eveh" means something like "belonging to" or "part of" a concept or population (as in "Rabbistevoh," which means "the rabbinate"). "Pareve" then would refer to the group of items which can be "paired with anything — both meaty and dairy items. My family and I join the thousands around the world in appreciation of your efforts and your excellent publication.

Name@Withheld

Parve is a Czech word meaning neutral.

*Peter Wein p.wein@obsgyn-mercy.unimelb.EDU.AU
Senior Lecturer Department of Obstetrics and
Gynaecology University of Melbourne, Mercy
Hospital for Women*

Re: Yiddle Riddle "Who was the first person to study Chumash with Rashi?" (Ohrnet Vayakhel/Pekudei):

My guess would be Rashi himself. I imagine he was "beside himself" with joy about his chiddushim (insights)! Regarding your answer that it was Rashi's father, there was actually someone who studied Chumash with Rashi before his father: The Malach, the angel, who taught Rashi before he was born!

Avi Smith <prowrite@netvision.net.il>

Just got "Ask the Rabbi" for the first time, and it was fantastic! We came up with another answer to the Yiddle Riddle: Moshe Rabbeinu, because Hashem showed Moshe the entire Torah, and everything that would be learned out from it throughout the

generations by the great Rabbanim of Israel (which would include Rashi's commentary). That one is from my sister Gitty Schnall.

Chana E. Schnall <emuna@juno.com>

My answer: Rashi's mother (or his father)!

Chaya Rochel Schwartz

Re: A person lost in the desert who forgets which day is Shabbos (Ohrnet Tetzaveh):

I once read an interesting (true) story about a person in this situation. When he gained consciousness, he had 2 concerns: He didn't know what day Shabbos was, and he had an intense craving for a cigarette (as he was a habitual smoker). A few days later, his first problem was solved: At sundown, his craving to smoke suddenly disappeared, and he realized it must be Shabbos; his observance of Shabbos was so ingrained in him that he never had the desire to smoke on Shabbos, and that pattern had apparently become part of his biological "clock!" Thank you for your newsletter — I really enjoy it!

Alisa Avruch <aandpsgang@juno.com>

Ohrnet Responds:

Fascinating! Although questionable from a halachic perspective.

Clarification

We excerpted a response from N. Slifkin regarding the identification of the arneves and shafan, without printing his comment in its entirety. By our removing part of his message from the context, many people seriously misunderstood the intention of the message. We apologize for any embarrassment that this may have caused.

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