



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem



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RABBI BEN E. DICTION

Name@Withheld from Thornhill, Ontario wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I recently got a blessing from a Chassidic Rabbi. This blessing was quite astonishing (in a good way). What is the significance of a blessing from a Chassidic Rabbi?

Dear Name@Withheld,

In our prayers we say G-d "does the will of those who fear Him." As our Sages teach: A *tzaddik* (righteous person) decrees, and Hashem fulfills. Also: "Anyone who has a sick person in his household should go to a *chacham* (a wise person) to pray for him."

Grand Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Horowitz (the "Bostoner Rebbe") says that a Chassidic Rabbi is in many respects like a plumber. Hashem wants only to bestow goodness upon us, and all a person needs to do is make himself into a vessel to receive the good. But our bad deeds "jam up" the pipes through which Divine goodness flows. A Chassidic Rabbi "unclogs" these pipes for the person.

A righteous person has a power of prayer more than most of us. Torah scholars (Chassidic or not) who have virtually perfected their character are known to have such powers. Until his passing several years ago, tens of thousands flocked to Rabbi Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky (the "Steipler") for his blessing.

It's known that prior to their highly dangerous but successful air strike on the Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1980, the Israeli pilots appeared before the Steipler and asked for his blessing. He told them "go in peace and return in peace."

Sources:

- Bava Batra 116a
- Ta'anit 23a

SURVIVAL OF THE JEWS

Sam Sherman from Brantford, Ontario <trapro@execulink.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I go to a private high school and I'm the only Jew. I always answer my friends' questions about Judaism, but I couldn't answer this one that they had asked me the other day and I was wondering if you could help me out. The question was "How come the Jewish people are still around after the thousands of years of persecution, enslavement, mass murder and all." I was stumped.

Dear Sam Sherman,

The Torah has kept us together, giving us a moral, intellectual and social structure, and giving us purpose and meaning in life. But more importantly, G-d has helped us survive, in order for us to accomplish our purpose, which is the propagation of ethical monotheism.

I suggest downloading a book from our website (it's free) called "Living Up to the Truth" by Rabbi Dr.

David Gottlieb: www.ohr.org.il/special/books/gott/truth.htm

UNVEILING

Name@Withheld from Merrick, NY <NameWithheld@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Please excuse me if I in any way insult or embarrass you or myself. I am of little means and have had no formal instruction in the Jewish ways. As a child I attended religious instruction in the Bronx, New York. For my Bar-Mitzvah I received some private instruction in the reading of the necessary prayers

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and portion of the Torah I was to read. That is the extent of my religious instruction.

The problem my brother and I face is that my mother died a year ago and we will be holding the unveiling of her stone soon. Neither of us are members of any congregation and have no access to a Rabbi. Equally important, after the cost of the burial and the cost of the stone we do not have \$500 to "hire" a Rabbi for the unveiling ceremony. Are there some prayers we can read aloud at the unveiling so that we do not disgrace the honor of our mother? Please be so kind as to advise what we can do? I would be so very grateful.

Dear Name@Withheld,

There is no need for the services to be conducted by a Rabbi. You and your brother will do perfectly. Go to a Jewish book store and buy a small prayer-book containing the appropriate prayers and the proper instructions.

It would be good to bring to the ceremony another few friends (10 Jewish male adults including you and your brother). May G-d console you both, together with the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

SILVER WHERE?

Yaakov Bock from Brooklyn, NY <ilduce@panix.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I hear stories about people accidentally using a dairy fork with a meat meal, or vice versa, and sticking it in a flower pot to render it kosher. What's the story with planting silverware for kashrut?

Dear Yaakov Bock,

The idea you heard about is often misunderstood. It is called *ne'itza* (plunging).

Ne'itza is sometimes necessary to cleanse knives of tiny particles of oily residue. This is more true of knives, since people tend to scrub them more gingerly than other silverware. If the knife is plunged into firm earth ten times it is assumed to be clean.

This only cleans the surface. It does not, however, expunge an absorbed flavor. For instance, if a milk knife cuts hot meat, the knife absorbs meat flavor. Plunging it into firm earth doesn't help in this case; rather, the knife must be cleaned and immersed in boiling water.

Source:

- Shulchan Aruch Yoreh De'ah 89

NAME THAT TUNE

Peter Fröhlich from Switzerland <pfroehlich@paus.ch> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Shalom. As a harpist I am interested in those psalms, which David once played before King Saul. Do you know if some of these original psalms in the original tunes are still known? Three years ago I was there in Israel. I got some psalm-songs in a museum in Jerusalem, but I am not sure if they are original. Many greetings.

Dear Peter Fröhlich,

I don't know what songs or melodies David sang for King Saul.

In a traditional book of the Bible in Hebrew, you will find markings on most of the words. These markings are the cantillation symbols which indicate the melody.

There are four different groups of melodies indicated by these symbols:

- The Pentateuch
- The Prophets
- The Five Scrolls
- The Books of Job, Proverbs, and Psalms

The melodies of the first three groups are well known and used. There are various customs regarding these melodies.

The melody for Job, Proverbs and Psalms has unfortunately been forgotten by most of Jewry. Yemenite Jews, however, have a traditional melody for these books as well.

Ever heard the expression "soul music?" It's a Jewish idea: Our sources say that the melody is to the written words of Torah what the soul is to the body.

Yiddle Riddle

Last week we asked: This morning in *shul*, I noticed that during *chazarat hashatz* (cantor's repetition of the silent prayer) I responded "amen" 26 times. However, my one friend responded "amen" only 22 times, and my other friend only three times! Can you explain why? (By the way, we all had finished our silent prayer completely, we all paid attention during the entire repetition, and we all responded properly.)

Answer: It was Rosh Chodesh, and we were in Jerusalem where *kohanim* bless the people every day by saying *birkas kohanim*. Therefore, I answered 26 times: 19 blessings of *shemoneh esrei*, 4 during *birkat kohanim* and 3 during *ya'ale v'yavo*. My one friend was a *kohen*, and therefore didn't say *amen* to the *birkat kohanim*, so he answered just 22 times. My other friend was the *chazan*, and he answered *amen* only to the 3 priestly blessings. (See *Mishna Berura O.C. 128:17 Shaar Hatzion 61* that a *chazan* using a *siddur* can respond to the 3 blessings of *birkat kohanim* but not to the actual blessing of the *kohen*.)

Submitted by Rabbi Avraham Connack, Jerusalem

THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

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

Re: Salt In Bread (Ohrnet Behar):

Another reason I have heard for why salt was offered with each offering: The world is composed of three parts: sea, midbar (desert) and arable, inhabited land. The Torah was given in the midbar and all of the sacrifices come from the land (in addition, the Beit Hamikdash was built in an inhabited place). So the sea came to Hashem and complained that it was being left out. To placate the sea (or to ensure the completeness that the offerings are supposed to create) salt was offered with the offerings in the Beit Hamikdash according to the Torah given in the Midbar.

Another explanation that comes to mind is: salty tears as in sowing with tears and reaping with joy. So we offer the tears with the fruit of our labors acknowledging that it all comes from Hashem. Thanks for an entertaining and informative email publication.

Nancy Wells <nwells@objs.com>

Re: Dove Peace Symbol (Ohrnet Bechukosai):

Regarding the dove as a symbol of peace, I draw attention to the fact that Jeremiah utilizes the phrase "the sword of the dove" (46:16 and 50:16). Our commentators write that the Hebrew root for "yonah" (dove) actually indicates either "oppression" (ona'ah) or "wine" (ya'in) [indicating a sword, blood-

red as if from wine], or even refers to the fact that the Babylonian kings employed the dove as one of their symbols of rule.

Yisrael Medad <isrmedia@netvision.net.il>

Re: Olden Day Cleansers (Ohrnet Beha'aloscha):

A friend who visited Cape Cod attended a lecture about the Mayflower. She learned about "fuller's earth" which the pilgrims used to remove oil from cloth. Apparently, it is a great absorber. I find it fascinating that soiled/stained priestly garments were used as wicks of the menorah! I have never heard of this before. It seems very practical to me.

Sandra Block, Scottsdale, Arizona
<rancher@phnx.uswest.net>

Re: Help me Grow!

My name is Saritt; I studied in Israel and am now in Monterrey, a city in Mexico that only has 120 Jewish families and none is religious. Because of this, I feel somewhat lonely and I can't keep growing in Torah because I have nothing here, so please, please send me all the shiurim and Parashat Hashavua that you can. Thank's alot! Tizku L'mitzvot!

Saritt Back <abrahamb@acnet.net>

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