



# Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

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### VOTE!

Lena < Lena45AD@aol.com > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

My question is: Does a Jew have an obligation to vote in an election?

Dear Lena,

In countries where you're obligated by law to vote, such as Australia and Belgium, one would be obligated to vote based on the concept "dina d'malchuta dina — the laws of the land are law." This means that a Jew is obligated to follow the laws of the country in which he lives.

In countries where voting is not obligatory by civil law, a Jew nevertheless has a responsibility to actively help in establishing a just society. As our Sages say "Pray for the peace of the kingdom (government) for if not for the fear of it, people would swallow each other alive." Voting is one way of helping establish a better society, and hence one has a responsibility to do so.

### Sources

- Bava Kama 113b
- Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat, 369:2
- Ethics of the Fathers 3:2

### ADAM'S TONGUE

Monte Stimmel from Orlando, Florida < cyber1@iag.net > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

What language did Adam & Eve speak? Was it Hebrew?

Dear Monte Stimmel,

We see evidence that Adam spoke Hebrew because he gave Eve two names, each of which makes sense only in Hebrew. He called her *isha* (woman) because "she was taken from *ish* (man)," and he called her *Chava* (Eve)

because "she was to be Mother of all *chai* (life)." The very name *Adam* is from the Hebrew word *adamah* (earth), referring to the fact that G-d created Adam from the earth. From the time of Adam and Eve until the generation of the Tower of Babel, everyone spoke Hebrew.

### Sources:

- Bereshet 2:23, 3:20
- Midrash Bereshet Rabbah 38

### TWO'S COMPANY, TEN'S A MINYAN

Barnet Shapiro from Cape Town, South Africa < shapiro@iafrica.com > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Why is the quorum "minyan" 10 people?

Dear Barnet Shapiro,

We find that the Torah uses the word *eidah* (congregation) to refer to a group of ten people. Ten is the smallest group about whom such a term is used.

Moshe sent 12 spies to scout out the Land of Israel. Ten of the spies returned with an evil report. The verse refers to these 10 as an "evil congregation." We know this refers to only 10 of the 12, because two of the spies, Calev and Joshua, were righteous and gave a good report about the Land.

### Sources:

- Megillah 23b

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## STICKS AND STONES

Joel L. Nafziger < naf@trianglenet.net > wrote:

*Dear Rabbi,*

*Why was the prescribed method of execution for extreme transgressions stoning? Why not some other method?*

Dear Joel L. Nafziger,

*S'kila*, usually translated as stoning, involved pushing the condemned off a high place backwards so that he breaks his neck when he falls. He was first given a heavy sedative.

The *Arizal* (Rabbi Yitzchak Luria) points out that *s'kila* was the sentence for offenses directly against G-d or against the "image of G-d" within mankind. Therefore this method was prescribed by the Torah, since by destroying the human form, it destroys the *tzelem Elokim* — image of G-d — as part of the process. Also, death by falling from a great height symbolizes the person, created in G-d's image, falling spiritually and morally by doing the sin, and hence causing his own destruction.

## SHOP TILL YOU STOP

Dan Roth < Beckdan@netmedia.net.il > wrote:

*Dear Rabbi,*

*We are told that all one's income is Divinely ordained each year with the exception of the expenses for Shabbat, Yom Tov and educating one's children (Beitzah 16a). For these expenses we are Divinely reimbursed. We are also told that one is obligated to gladden one's wife on Yom Tov by providing her with nice clothes (Pesachim 109a). My question is: Is this expense of buying clothes for one's wife included in the expenses of Yom Tov for which we are assured isn't part of our budget, and for which we are reimbursed?*

Dear Dan Roth,

Buying your wife festive clothing for *Yom Tov* is certainly a legitimate *Yom Tov* expense; a person is reimbursed for added expenses he incurs buying *Yom Tov* clothing just as he is for other *Yom Tov* expenses. So, if your wife comes back from a holiday shopping spree and says, "Guess how much money I saved you today, dear!" you should realize that she is, in fact, right.

## JET FAST

Shlomo < Selenk36@ccvax.mmc.edu > wrote:

*Dear Rabbi,*

*I will be traveling from the United States to Eastern Europe on Tisha B'av. When the sun sets after I arrive, it will be much less than 24 hours after the sun sets in the states as I'm leaving. Other than changing the day of my travel, how should I time my fast? Thanks!*

Dear Shlomo,

There are reasons not to travel on *Tisha B'av*. For one, you shouldn't occupy yourself with matters which divert your attention from the sense of mourning for the destruction of Jerusalem.

However, if you do fly, you fast according to local time. That is, you go according to the time wherever you are. So if you travel from west to east you will indeed have a short fast.

## Yiddle Riddle

Which verse in the Torah begins and ends with the same word.

The word beginning the verse begins with a *vav* (meaning *and*), while the word ending the verse does not, but otherwise it is the same word.

*Riddle Idea: Rabbi Dr. Avigdor Boncheck*

# THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

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

## Re: Intermarriage [Ohrnet Naso]:

I am really touched by the thought and sincerity of Louis Alexander's letter in the Naso issue of Public Domain regarding intermarriage. I was born Jewish, but I am the first in generations to actually be observant. I'm sure it's no coincidence that I'm also the only one of my relatives in a few generations to maintain a healthy family environment (only one marriage, etc.). Among religious Jews this is normal, but among my non-religious friends (Jewish and non), this is a bizarre anomaly! It occurs to me often that one either intuitively feels that there is a higher, objective Reality, a Designer behind the scenes — the realization of which bestows the dual blessing of purpose and responsibility — or one does not. Certainly a person's *raison d'être* hinges on this distinction — the realization upon which all other realizations are made. Living this realization is the light unto nations.

*Saul Stern <sjstern@med.cornell.edu>*

## Re: The 1:60 ratio and the Taste Threshold [Parshat Naso]:

I once had the privilege to write about the late Dr. David Israel Macht of Baltimore who strongly believed there was no contradiction between Judaism and science and in a number of studies offered experimental proof to support this view. In a fascinating article entitled "The Bible as a Source of Subjects for Scientific Research" (Medical Leaves 1940; 3:174-184), Dr. Macht showed

the harmful physiological effects of meat and milk combinations and the diminution of this toxicity at a ratio of one part of one ingredient to fifty-nine of the other. Among his many other findings were the demonstration of the toxic effects of the blood and various tissues of animals slaughtered through conventional means as opposed to those slaughtered in accordance with Jewish law (*shechita*) and the differences in puerperal blood according to gender of the child (see Leviticus 12:1-5).

David Wilk <wilkda@mail.biu.ac.il>

## Re: Sum-Buddies (Ohrnet Bamidbar):

Whether the numbers of each tribe were rounded off or not, two numbers were obviously exact: The number of firstborn Israelites and the number of non-firstborn Levites. There were 22,273 firstborn Israelites. That's not a round number. Therefore, when the Torah tells us that there were 22,000 non-firstborn Levites who redeemed 22,000 firstborn Israelites, the number must also be exact, since the Torah tells us of the 273 remaining firstborn Israelites who paid 1365 silver coins, five coins per person. If so, the number of non-firstborn Levites is exact, not to the tens or hundreds but to the thousands. This means that Hashem obviously "arranged" the numbers miraculously, for whatever purpose. If so, there should be no reason to assume that any other numbers were rounded off.

*Yoni Bokow Yeshivat Itri, Jerusalem*

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