



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

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MOTHERS AND FATHERS

Nathan Silberstein from Los Angeles, CA

< nsilberstein@ibm.net > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

What is the halachic source of matrilineal descent? Why are we set against patrilineal descent when all of our ancestors in the Torah are referred to as so and so son of so and so, referring only to the father's name?

Dear Nathan Silberstein,

In the time of the Patriarchs it appears that descent followed the father. However, the period of the Patriarchs was before the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. It was only with the revelation on Sinai that the Jewish people received their legal system. Therefore it is impossible to bring Halachic, legal proofs from the Patriarchs. Our source for Halacha is the Written and Oral Torah.

The Mishna in Tractate Kiddushin 66b states that if a child's mother is not Jewish, then the child is not Jewish.

The Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushin 68b, derives this Halacha from a verse in Deuteronomy 7:1-5, which also contains the prohibition against intermarriage. "When the L-rd your G-d brings you to the land that you will inherit, many nations will fall away before you; the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Prizites, the Hivites and the Jebusites... And you shall not marry with them; do not give your daughters to his sons and do not take his daughters for your sons. For he will turn your son away from me and they will worship other gods...." The Talmud points out that the verse only seems to be concerned with the son of the *Israelite woman* being turned away, "for he (the gentile)" will turn your son away. It does not seem to be concerned that "she (the gentile) will turn your son away." The implication is that the son of the Jewish woman and gentile man is still considered "your (the Jewish grandfather in this case) son," but in the case of a gentile woman married to a Jewish man, the child is not

considered "your son" and therefore there is no concern about his turning away. This follows Rashi and Tosfot Ri Hazaken in their explanation of the Gemara.

Tosfot (ad loc. "*Amar krah*") offers a number of different methods of derivation from the verse, but agrees with the conclusion. This law is also found in the Mishna in Yevamot (ch. 2, 21a): "He counts as a brother in every respect unless he was the son of a maidservant or of a gentile woman."

This halacha is codified in the Code of Jewish Law, Even HaEzer 8:5, and in Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Forbidden Relationships, 15:4. Maimonides states: "This is the general rule: The status of an offspring from a gentile man or from a gentile woman is the same as his mother's; we disregard the father."

Another source in the Torah is the verse in Leviticus 24:10: "the son of an Israelite woman went out — and he was the son of an Egyptian man." This person is described as being "in the midst of the community of Israel" — in other words, Jewish.

Probably the most explicit verse against patrilineal descent is in the book of Ezra 10:2-3: Some of the Jews who had returned from the exile declare, "We have trespassed against our G-d and have taken foreign wives of the people of the land. Yet, there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. Therefore, let us make a covenant with our G-d to put away all the wives *and such as are born to them*, according to the counsel of the L-rd and of those who assemble at the commandment of G-d; let it be done according to the law."

Sources are also in Midrash Rabbah, Numbers, 19, and Jerusalem Talmud, Kiddushin 3:12.

Do we ignore the father completely? Certainly not. The father is the one who determines what tribe the child is from. That is: Kohen, Levi, Yisrael. Also, in determining royalty and other leadership roles among the Jewish people we go from father to son.

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PEACE IN TRIPLICATE - SHABBAT

Moshe Pripas from Jerusalem <pripas@netvision.net.il> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Three years ago my mother-in-law asked why we say "Shalom Aleichem" (Peace unto You) on Friday night three times. I gave the reason for being a "chazaka" (emphasis) but that itself wasn't satisfying. Since then I have asked lots of people and nobody ever gave me a different answer.

Dear Moshe Pripas,

The *Likutei Maharich* asks your question. He explains as you did, that repeating something three times adds emphasis. We do the same in other parts of our liturgy, such as in *kiddush levana* and the bedtime *shema*.

But I've heard another answer: The Talmud states that two angels accompany a person as he walks home from synagogue Friday night. These angels are in addition to the usual angel who accompanies him at all times. Hence, we have three angels in all. Thus we recite "Shalom Aleichem" one time for each angel.

The problem with this answer is that people are usually accompanied by *two* angels at all times, making four in all. This can be answered according to the Zohar, which states that not two angels but rather two *groups* of angels accompany a man on Friday night. These, in addition to the usual group of two angels which accompany the person at all times, give us three groups in all. We recite one "Shalom Aleichem" for each group. This also explains the use of the plural "aleichem" — "unto You (plural)" — as well.

Sources:

- See Tractate Menachot 65a and Rashi ibid.
- Tractate Shabbat 119b
- Tractate Berachot 60b, Rashi ibid.

PEACE IN TRIPLICATE - FAMILY

Name@Withheld from Mexico wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Hi! Well, I have two questions: I'm a *ba'alat teshuva* for almost two years and my parents are not very happy now. Because I just finished high school in a Jewish secular school here in Mexico and I think it's time to study Torah full time. I'm sure that the best place is Israel, in Jerusalem. But my parents

don't want me to go there. But I want to go! What can I do? How can I get their permission? Because I don't want to go without their permission; it will be very difficult for me and also for them. And the other question is: Where can I go? Do you have a school for girls? If you do, please, I beg you to send me all the information as soon as possible. Thank you very much.

Dear Name@Withheld,

It is wonderful that you want to study Torah, and to do so in Israel. Israel may definitely be the best place for you to study.

You asked: "How can I get my parents' permission?" I guess this is going to sound pretty obvious, but the only way to "get" your parents permission is for them to "give" it to you. And the only way you can possibly hope for them to give their permission is through clear and mature communication. You need to understand clearly why they object to your going to Israel.

Are they afraid that it's not safe in Israel? Are they worried that you will not be in a supervised environment? Or are they afraid that you will like Israel and decide to live here, far away from them? Perhaps they are afraid that in Israel you will become "more religious" and therefore you won't love them as much because they are "less religious"?

Try to find out the real underlying reason they don't want you to come. If their main fear is that their "little girl" is growing up and becoming her own woman, you need to reassure them that wherever you go and whatever path you take, you will continue to love and respect them.

Is there is a Rabbi who you know and whom your parents respect? If so, perhaps your parents would be willing to get together with him and talk things over.

Do research and find out which school or schools you might wish to attend. If you have brochures and information about a school in Israel, perhaps your parents will feel better about it.

Do you want a Spanish-speaking program or an English-speaking program? I suggest the following two schools: Spanish-speaking — *Ayelet Hashachar*, Mrs. Rivka Trop -972-2-582-5036; English-speaking — *Neve Yerushalayim*, Rabbi Chalkovsky - 972-2-651-9276. If you want brochures from these schools, send me your mailing address and I will mail them to you.

Yiddle Riddle

Last week we asked:

Please fill in the missing 5 numbers in the following sequence: 15, 16, 115, 116, 215, 216, ____, ____, ____, ____, ____, 315, 316.

Answer: 270, 272, 275, 304 and 309. Why:

Numbers in Hebrew are written by combining the letters. For example *aleph*=1, *bet*=2, *yud*=10, *kuf*=100, etc. So, 11 would be *yud-aleph*. However, some numbers are not written in the normal form. 15 would normally be written *yud* and *hey*, but because this spells a name of Hashem, it is customarily written *tet-vav* (as in *Tu B'Shvat*). The same is true of *tet-zayin*, 16, instead of *yud* and *vav*. All the given numbers in the question are written in reverse order.

The numbers 270, 272, 275, 304 and 309 are also numbers which are not written in the normal pattern, because the normal pattern would spell a word with negative connotations. 270 and 275 would normally be spelled *raysh ayin* and *raysh ayin hey*. These spell *ra* and *ra'ah*, both of which mean "bad". 272 would normally be spelled *resh ayin bet* which spells *ra'av* meaning "famine." 304 would normally be spelled *shin dalet* which spells *shaid* meaning "demon." 309 would normally be spelled *shin tet* which spells *shat* meaning "to go astray." Since the normal way to write these numbers spells words with negative connotations, these numbers are written in reverse order.

Riddle Submitted by Lev Seltzer <levella@csi.com>

THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

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

Re: "An Open Book Test" (Ohrnet Shlach):

It was brought to our attention that the Rabbi in the story "An Open Book Test" (Ohrnet Shlach) was Rabbi Noach Weinberg, shlita.

Ohrnet Responds: At the time of his ruling, Rabbi Zalman Nechemia Goldberg informed us that others disagree with his ruling.

Re: Carrying out in a Holiday Inn (Ohrnet Shlach):

Thank you very much for your terrific publications. In Ask the Rabbi Parshas Shlach you ruled in the name of Rabbi Zalman Nechemia Goldberg, shlita, that it is permissible to carry inside a hotel. I want to point out that Rabbi Weiss, author of the "Minchas Yitzchak," forbids to carry in hotels in most cases (unless the owner lives in the hotel or that all the guests eat together). Chazak V'amatz.

Re: Yiddle Riddle (Ohrnet Tzav):

In Yiddle Riddle for Parshas Tzav, you asked "Which four people's names in the Chumash also appear as names in the Megilla?" I found one that you missed: Tarshish (Bereishis 10:4, Esther 1:14).

Yitzchak Morel <ajmorel@aol.com>

Eliezer Y. Glick-Cooper, Bayit Vegan Jerusalem

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