



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

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A WAIL OF A WALL - WHICH OF THE WEST?

Tammy from Waterloo, Canada

< tjfannin@ahsmail.uwaterloo.ca > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Can you tell me the historical and emotional significance of the Western wall of the Temple Mount to the people of today? Why do they go, what do they get from visiting? Can anyone go? Thank you for your time.

Hillel Gershuni from Jerusalem, Israel < gershun@internet-zahav.net > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

When I pray at the Kotel (Western Wall), to what direction should I pray? Straight towards the Kotel? That is not the direction of the Kodesh Hakadoshim (Holy of Holies), but all the people I've seen there do it. Or should I not face straight towards the wall, but rather towards the Dome of the Rock, which is the place of the Kodesh Hakadoshim, but maybe it's forbidden to pray in this direction?

Dear Hillel Gershuni and Tammy,

The Holy Temple was the place where G-d's Presence was manifest among the Jewish People in ancient Israel. In the Holy Temple itself, the Divine Presence was most manifest in the western part. The ark containing the "two tablets" was in the west, and the western lamp of the menorah candelabra burned miraculously for centuries.

Even though the Temple was destroyed, the Western Wall remains until this day. This was foretold by the midrash which states "the Western Wall will never be destroyed, because the Divine Presence is manifest in the west."

But the history of this site goes back much further than the Temple. Our sources state that this was the place

where Avraham offered his son Yitzchak, and it was here that Yaakov envisioned the ladder. It was from this place that G-d took the earth from which He fashioned Adam, and it is the center of the universe, the point from which the universe was created and from which it expanded.

Therefore, the Western Wall has a powerful spiritual and emotional pull on all humanity. People from all over the world are drawn there to interface with their souls' deepest yearnings.

Besides its spiritual significance, the Temple Mount is also of historical and archeological interest. Most of the western and southern walls of the Temple Mount date back to Herod's renovation of the Temple. There is a possibility that the lowest levels of these walls are from King Solomon's Temple. The northern wall dates back to Herod and the eastern wall is from the Second Temple of Nechemia, with some additions by the Hasmonean dynasty and some renovations by Herod.

Some of the stones are incredibly heavy, the transporting of which would have been extremely difficult. One of the stones is said to weigh approximately 628 tons! Archeological evidence indicates that the enormous stones were transported by rolling them on logs that were placed under the stones.

It is actually possible to see the Western Wall on the Internet! Just go to: <http://www.virtual.co.il> and click on "KotelKam".

Regarding which way to face when praying at the Western Wall, the Talmud states that one who is in Jerusalem should face the Sanctuary, and one who is in the Sanctuary should face the *Kodesh Hakadoshim*, the Holy of Holies. When you are standing at the Western Wall, even though you are close, you are not actually in the place of the Sanctuary. Therefore you need not face the *Kodesh Hakadosim*. You should face towards the wall, envisioning yourself standing in front of the *Kodesh Hakadoshim*.

Sources:

- Bamidbar Rabbah 11
- Berachot 30a
- Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 94:1

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ORIGAMI

Avrom from Ilford, UK <toyenbankes@kosher.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Is it permitted to use origami on Shabbos? (Origami is the ancient art of paper folding.)

Dear Avrom,

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Aurbach, *zatzal*, prohibits making toys — like a boat, or hat — by folding paper, since it is like making a utensil. However, if the paper was folded into a toy before Shabbat, it is permitted to use it on Shabbat.

Sources:

- Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchata Ch.16:19

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING AHARON

Ronald Schnur from Princeton, NJ <RSchnur@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

What is the meaning in English of the name Aaron ("Aharon")?

Dear Ronald Schnur,

According to the *Otzar Midrashim*, during Yocheved's pregnancy with Aharon, Pharoah decreed that all male Jewish babies should be thrown in the Nile. G-d performed a miracle and did not let even one of them die.

In recognition of this miracle that happened during her pregnancy she called her son Aharon, from the root, *harah*, which means "pregnant."

Perhaps the A, or *aleph* at the beginning of the word is indicative of the fact that not even one, (*aleph* = one) died.

Source:

- *Otzar Hamidrashim*, "Moshe" Paragraph 4

ARUBA R&R

Doron Spierer from Bala Cynwyd, PA <dspierer@pol.net> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Please direct me to the appropriate web site. I am going on vacation and need to figure out candle lighting time for Aruba, 70 degrees West Longitude, 12 degrees, 30 minutes North Latitude, for Friday night, July 3, 1998. Thank you.

Debra Berke <berked@libertytravel.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I have a couple that wishes to travel to the Caribbean next week. They will only stay in a hotel that will service kosher meals. Please help if you know any hotels that will help them. All of the hotels that I know of only serve kosher during the holidays.

Dear Debra Berke and Doron Spierer,

Regarding the kashrut "scene" in the Caribbean and the candle lighting time in Aruba, I recommend you contact Rabbi Levi Ishak, the rabbi of the Jewish community in Barranquilla, Venezuela on the Caribbean coast. Rabbi Ishak can be reached at 57-56-340-050 or 57-56-344-514.

A site that lists candle lighting times is Virtual Jerusalem's website:

<http://www.virtual.co.il/depts/torah/candles.htm>

A nice vacation to all!

Doron Spierer <dspierer@pol.net> responds:

Thank you so much for answering my e-mail. I did some searching of my own on the web and found the following site:

<http://www.kashrut.com/zemanim>

They will calculate all appropriate times based on location or latitude/longitude (although getting the latitude/longitude feature to work is a little tricky). Thank you so much for your help. I just wanted you to know about the above site.

MITZVAH DELAY

Miriam Rozin from Portland, Oregon <rozinm@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

My firstborn, a son, was my first pregnancy and delivered naturally in Israel. He had his brit milah as required. However, we never had a "pidyon haben." I know we were supposed to do it at 30 days but my question is: Can we still do it now — he is 2 1/2 years old? Are there any other factors to consider?

Dear Miriam Rozin,

The *mitzvah* of *pidyon haben*, redemption of the first-born son, should ideally be performed on the 31st day from the baby's birth. If it wasn't done then, the obligation remains, and it should be performed as soon as possible. If the father doesn't perform *pidyon haben*, then the boy must do so himself when he grows up.

There are other factors to consider. For example, if either the father or the mother is a *kohen*

or a *levi*, then the child is exempt from *pidyon haben*. To perform the mitzvah, the father gives a specific amount of silver or item of value to a *kohen* and says two blessings. To make sure that everything is done properly, the entire procedure should be supervised by an Orthodox rabbi.

Sources:

- Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 305:1,11,15,18

Yiddle Riddle

Name@Withheld wrote us with the following:

This might not even qualify as a Yiddle Riddle, but those from New York will appreciate it: What prominent day in the Jewish calendar can be found on the standard map of the New York City subway system? (Hint: *Tachanun* is not recited on this day.)

Answer:

Near the Port Authority Bus Terminal, the map identifies Ninth Avenue as "9 Av" (and the next street over is "10 Av," appropriate for this year since the fast is held on the 10th of Av.) Another answer is 1 Av, which is *Rosh Chodesh*. (15 Av, *Tu B'Av*, is not a good answer, because the Manhattan part of the map goes from 1 Av to 12 Av, and parts of Brooklyn and Queens have 14, 18, 20, 23 and 30 Av. But no 15.)

THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

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

Re: Cantillation (Ohrnet Korach):

Hello, I read with interest your response to Peter Frohlich concerning the melodies used to chant Torah. When I was in cantorial school, I was taught that there are in fact six divisions or groupings to the cantillation symbols or "trope" as we call them:

1)Torah 2)Haftarah 3)The Megillot read on the Shalosh Regalim: Shir Hashirim, Ruth & Kohelet 4)Megillat Esther 5)Megillat Eichah — also used for the haftarah on Shabbat Hazon and the for the haftarah on Tisha B'Av 6)High Holiday — used for chanting the Torah on Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur.

The trope for the books of Job, Proverbs and Psalms are grouped together by the acronym "EMET." Aleph for Iyov (Job), mem for Mishlei (Proverbs) and tav for Tehillim (Psalms). The trope for these three books is distinctly different from the others. There are several additional trope symbols that are not found anywhere else. Also the "grammar" of the trope is different, meaning the order in which symbols can appear has a logic not

shared by the other books. The melodies for these books fell into disuse: A classic case of "Use it or Lose it," because they are not read publicly.

Joel Smith <Jsmith@sentryl.com>

Re: Breaking the Glass Under the Chuppah:

Before my own wedding nearly 12 years ago, a neighbor, who is the granddaughter of Reb Yaakov Kamenetsky, advised me that at the moment the glass is broken, both the bride and groom should say to themselves "zecher l'churban" ("remember the destruction"). Her husband said (apparently something he learned when studying with her grandfather) that many divorces ultimately occur because the bride and groom forget that the breaking of the glass is to remind us that the Beis Hamikdash is no longer standing, and that it doesn't mean "mazal tov." Thank you for providing this wonderful service.

A Friend <wwide@erols.com>

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