



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

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OHR SOMAYACH תנוח טאנענבאום קאלעדזש
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THE BOSS'S BAD SIDE

Name@Withheld from Miami, FL wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

On teshuvah (repentance), when one has sinned against another, it is not going to have been a pleasant experience. Judaism teaches us as individuals to "do" rather than to give lip service for something. Therefore, is it not better to just "do" and improve upon a sin rather than apologize and ask for forgiveness?

I think of a time when my employer and I had a heated discussion and things were said that were better left unsaid. While I feel the need for teshuvah through my disrespect of my employer, I feel that this can be accomplished by improving upon my work product and attitude, rather than re-visit a sensitive and bothersome approach. I would appreciate your insight.

Dear Name@Withheld,

Although you are correct regarding the main components of *teshuvah*, you also have an obligation to appease your employer if he still holds a grudge. However, it does not have to be in an embarrassing way; you can send chocolates or a bottle of whisky with a short note.

LUNAR LITURGY

Peter Merker from NYC < peter106@aol.com > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Where does the halacha for kiddush levana (blessing for the New Moon) come from and have there been any Torah authorities who were opposed to it?

Dear Peter Merker,

The source for blessing the new moon comes from the Talmud. To my knowledge, there have never been any Torah authorities who opposed it.

I assume that your question is based on the misconception that sanctifying the moon bears a resemblance to moon-worship. This is an absolute fallacy. We are not worshipping the moon, we are praising G-d for His marvelous creations, including the miracle of the moon's monthly rebirth. One of the principal ways to recognize G-d is through G-d's works; the immutable monthly cycle of the moon is one of the more visible aspects of G-d's masterful creation.

Additionally, we see the monthly rebirth of the moon as a symbol of G-d's promise to ultimately redeem the Jewish People and to make us whole again.

Sources:

- Talmud Sanhedrin 42a

THOUGHT AND ACTION

Name@Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I have heard that Halacha is related to philosophy and you can learn philosophical ideas through Halacha, but I don't understand how, please help.

Dear Name@Withheld,

This is true. Here's an example: The Code of Jewish Law states the following: "It is customary to say to someone who has bought new clothing, 'May you wear it out and renew it.' And there are those who wrote that one should not say this for shoes or clothing made of leather, for if he does wear it out, another animal will have to be killed to make a new garment, and it states, 'His mercy is upon all His creations.' Now, although this reasoning is not

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conclusive, many people do not say this [blessing over leather shoes or clothing]."

That is the halacha. What is the philosophical lesson? Even though we are allowed to use animals, we should nevertheless not celebrate their death. As Nachmanides says: The regulation of *shechita* (ritual slaughter), in all its details, is in order to reduce the pain that the animal registers, and it acts as a reminder that we are not dealing with things outside the law; they are not automatons devoid of life, but they are living beings.

This is just one of the examples of the connection between Jewish law and Jewish outlook. There are countless others. Perhaps the best exposition of this idea is found in a book called Horeb, by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch.

Sources:

- Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 223:6 Rema
- Nachmanides, Deuteronomy 22:6

IS HASHEM IN THE BIBLE?

Marilyn Brewer <mbrewer@fastdata.net> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Who is Hashem? I have never found that name in the Bible.

Dear Marilyn Brewer,

We use the word *Hashem* to refer to G-d. Literally, Hashem means "The Name." The word Hashem

actually appears in the Torah, as in "...fear the great and awesome Hashem (Name) — the L-rd your G-d." (Deuteronomy 28:58).

Essentially, the reason for using a substitute is out of respect. The actual name of Hashem has inherent sanctity and must be treated with respect; for example, it may not be erased.

TALMUD CHACHAM

Sheldon J. Efenbein from Massapequa Park, NY <ivorydoc@optonline.net> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Please differentiate Talmud, Mishna, and Gemara.

Dear Sheldon J. Efenbein,

The *Mishna* is the famous composition by Rabbi Yehudah the Nasi in which he compiled the Oral Law (revealed at Mt. Sinai) and the major teachings of the *Tanaim*, the early scholars from the time of the Second Temple until about 100 years after its destruction. The Talmud is the composition containing the explanations of the Mishnah by the *Amoraim*, the later scholars who lived after the death of Rabbi Yehudah the Nasi, circa 220 CE-500 CE. It was compiled mainly by the Sages Ravina and Rav Ashi in the last generation of *Amoraim*.

The word *Gemara* is simply the Aramaic word meaning *Talmud*; hence these terms are used interchangeably.

Yiddle Riddle

Last week we asked: During a certain period of the year, there is something we do three times a day, almost every day. We do it twice with one part of the body and once with another part of the body (according to Ashkenazic custom). What is it?

Answer: *Nefilat apaim* (*tachanun*) during *selichot*. It is performed twice with the left arm and once with the right, as follows:

Starting several days before Rosh Hashanah and continuing until Yom Kippur, we say penitential *selichot* prayers, part of which includes *nefilat apaim*, the putting down of the head. *Nefilat apaim* is performed by putting one's head down upon one's sleeve and saying a prayer. It is customarily performed by putting one's head down upon one's weaker arm (for most people, the left arm.)

Nefilat apaim is repeated two more times as part of the normal daily prayers, once during the morning prayers (*shacharit*) and once during the afternoon prayers (*mincha*). During *mincha*, it is also performed as mentioned above, by putting the head on the left arm. During *shacharit* however, in deference to the *tefillin* which one wears on one's left arm, one performs *nefilat apaim* upon one's right arm.

Riddle submitted by Rabbi Yonasan Taub

THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

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

Re: Little Kippur (Ohrnet Vayelech):

Regarding the question of Hoshana Rabba being called Yom Kippur Katan, allow me to explain the background as to how this misunderstanding arose. Coming from a North-Hungarian Germanic extraction (Ungarisha Overlander), allow me to say that in my Father's house, Hoshana Rabba was always referred to as a Mini Yom Kippur; in other words, if you had not quite made it by Yom Kippur itself, you could still correct the sealing of your decree up to the end of Hoshana Rabba. Now take the English expression Mini Yom Kippur and translate it into Hebrew, what do you get? "Yom Kippur Katan."

Joseph Lunzer, Har Nof, Jerusalem

Re: Mini Ha Ha (Ohrnet Bereishet):

Regarding your Yiddle Riddle, the shortest word in the Torah is the hey in Parshat Ha'azinu in the word Ha'lashem. It is written as a large letter and is considered a word to itself. I am a ba'al koreh and was taught that when reading this passage, one should read it as two words (i.e., Ha Lashem) similar to the word aish dat in Parshat V'zot Habracha, which is pronounced as two words although written as one.

Michael Mirsky <mirskym@mail.interlog.com>

Ohrnet Notes:

There are several accepted customs regarding the conducting of the Torah reading. Please see *Minchas Shai* on *Devarim 32:6*

Re: Suffering for Adam's Sin (Ohrnet Bereishet):

Your explanation of why future generations suffer from Adam's sin reminded me of an illustration I once heard from a well known scholar: If a rich person squanders his wealth and his children are raised in poverty as a result, they are not "punished" for their father's actions, yet they suffer as a result of their father's actions. This does not contradict the principle that one is not punished for the sins of his fathers.

Similarly, I saw that statistically, people whose mothers smoked while they are in utero are more likely to become smokers than people whose mothers didn't smoke. These children definitely suffer because of their mothers' actions, but certainly have the free will to choose whether to smoke or not, and if they choose to smoke, are responsible for their own actions.

On a humorous note, I remember the line of the beggar from "Fiddler on the Roof:"

Beggar: "Only one kopek? Last week you gave me two kopeks!"

Rich Man: "I had a bad week."

Beggar: "If you had a bad week, why should I suffer?"

Benjie Gerstman, Jerusalem <gerstbpg@netvision.net.il>

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