



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

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OHR SOMAYACH אוהר שומאך
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Parshat Vayigash

FOOD FIGHT

Gerry Sutofsky from NY <gerest1@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I am a teacher at a public school in New York. Every year we have a luncheon sponsored by the school PTA. As there are a number of observant teachers who require kosher food, it is always provided for them. My question is, there are also a number of non-observant Jewish teachers who eat non-kosher almost all the time but request kosher food for this luncheon.

This has caused conflict between certain observant and non-observant teachers who feel that it is causing an undue financial burden upon the parents who sponsor this. As one teacher puts it, you have to differentiate between those who require and those who request. My question is: Is there a halachic source that I can refer to for solving this problem? Are we not obligated to give kosher food to any Jew if he/she requests it? Anything you can cite would be quite helpful. Thank you!

Dear Gerry Sutofsky,

According to Jewish law, one should give kosher food even to a non-observant Jew. Giving non-kosher food is a transgression of the commandment "Do not place a stumbling block before a blind person" (*Leviticus 19*). The fact that these teachers are not consistent does not affect the fact that they are obligated to eat kosher food. Even a Jew who has sinned is still a Jew.

Sources:

- Talmud, Tractate Avodah Zarah 6b
- Code of Jewish Law, Yoreh Deah 151:1

YAHOO!

Email@Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Explain the "yahu" ending on many names. In our English Scripture we have the name Elijah but I see it spelled Eliyahu in Jewish texts. Many other names have the same ending. I understand the "Jah" refers to the name of G-d. But please explain the "yahu" spelling.

Dear Email@Withheld,

"Yahu" is the original Hebrew ending of many Hebrew names. For instance, Elijah is Eliyahu (my middle name!), Isaiah is Yishayahu. Yahu is a short term used as the name of G-d, as it is spelled with the first three letters of the Holy Name. For example, Eliyahu means My G-d (Eli) is called Yahu; the name Shemaryahu means "my guard" is Yahu.

STOLEN CHARITY

Rivka from Manchester, England <majw@mcmil.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

If money that had been put aside for charity is stolen, must one replace it?

Dear Rivka,

I spoke with Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch, *shlita*, and he said that although a Torah court would not force one to do so, the person has a moral obligation to replace the money.

If you have E-Mail and a question, you can submit it to Ask The Rabbi for possible inclusion in a future edition. Just write your question using your E-Mail program, set the subject to "Ask The Rabbi" and send it to info@ohr.org.il. Or use our form at <http://www.ohr.org.il/ask/page/ask.htm>. We can't include all questions submitted, but we do try to respond to everyone.

Ask The Rabbi is written by Rabbi Moshe Lazerus, Rabbi Reuven Lauffer, Rabbi Reuven Subar, Rabbi Avrohom

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THE PLACE

Ilana Rosansky from NYC < Ilana@oursquare.com > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

G-d is called Hamakom, which literally means "The Place." For example: "HaMakom y'nachem etchem — May the Omnipresent comfort you," or "Baruch HaMakom, baruch Hu — Blessed is the Omnipresent, blessed is He." What is the origin/source of this name for G-d?

Dear Ilana Rosansky,

The Pesiktah Rabbati, Parsha 21, explains that "Hamakom" — The Place — as a name for G-d means "He is the place of the world, the world is not His place." This name stresses the concept that G-d created space, and that space is within G-d, and not the reverse.

WHERE'S PAGE ONE?

Michael Braitman from Pittsburgh, PA
< mabst102@pitt.edu > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Why does each tractate in the Talmud begin with the page number of two (beit) and not one? Thank you.

Dear Michael Braitman,

The real reason is because the front page of the volume is considered page one. Look at printed books today, Jewish and secular, which usually begin with page nine because of all the pages before the beginning of the actual book.

I once heard a "cute" explanation of why they began with page two: When a person sits down to study, even though he has not yet begun to study, yet he has

overcome his evil inclination by merely opening the book of Talmud. This is considered as if he has begun already, and that is the "first page."

TRUE LIE

Rafael de Lucca from Brazil
< santoamaro@inprima.com.br > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I was reading the questions and your answers, and became very curious about Yaakov and Esav, who were part of one of the questions you were asking. I would like to ask you why Yaakov and his mother lied to his father to get blessed? Thank you so much.

Dear Rafael de Lucca,

Esav sold his birthright to Yaakov, including the right for the blessing, so Yaakov was only trying to get something which actually belonged to him. Viewed this way, it was in fact Esav who was trying to steal the blessing.

On a deeper level, Judaism doesn't limit the definition of truth to the factual occurrences as they seem to happen. Judaism defines truth as "the will of G-d." Subsequently, there are certain scenarios where the will of G-d is not to relate to the factual occurrence as is, and this is not considered a lie. We see in the Torah (*Genesis 18:13*) that even G-d changed, so to speak, Sarah's words when reporting them to Avraham, in order to preserve domestic tranquility. The Talmud (*Bava Metziah 24a*) states three cases only when one may do so; all of them are specific scenarios where one wishes to avoid harm or discomfort from others, or to maintain ones own humility. For Yaakov to gain the blessings was the will of G-d (as they belonged to him), so any speech which was "untrue" is considered truth.

Yiddle Riddle

"The long, the short, the black, the white, the his, the hers and the theirs." What seven similar days, i.e., days which are observed with similar forms of observance, in the Jewish calendar do these describe?

Riddle submitted by Dons Hool, Kollel Ponevez, as heard from his mother

THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

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

Re: Kabbalists (Ohrnet Vayishlach):

In a recent "Ask the Rabbi," a woman named Sharon wrote about her meeting with a reputed kabbalist. I believe you missed something very important in your answer to her. Kabbala is something which even many of our greatest talmidei chachamim (Torah scholars) don't pretend to fully understand, while many unlearned people, incompetent in other areas, pretend to be fully well versed in. As Rabbi Eziel Tauber said, anyone who says he's a kabbalist knows a lot indeed about kabbala (lit. "reception")...he knows how to take your money. You should have pointed out to Sharon to make sure that her contact is a valid Torah guide.

I'm not saying that she didn't speak to someone knowledgeable about kabbala, only that you should have warned her, as she may have spoken to one of the many charlatans masquerading as "kabbalists."

Yosef Kenner <Hawkjoe@aol.com>

Re: Talking after Bedtime Shema (Ohrnet Vayeitze):

Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef has a rather lengthy responsum on the topic (Yechaveh Da'at, 4:21 pp. 114-124). If I understand it correctly, Rabbi Yosef is of the opinion that one may speak if necessary after having said hamapil and shema.

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

Re: Lighten Up (Ohrnet Vayeitze):

Regarding your answer to Leora regarding her house guest who "is definitely going to" turn off the light on Shabbos, I do not understand why you didn't tell her to tell the guest that she may not use the lights? After all, it is her (Leora's) house. It shouldn't

matter if this "guest" were even a parent. A person has every right to ask that someone else not be mechalel Shabbos (desecrate Shabbat) in their own home. Your suggestion of using a Shabbos clock, candle, or whatever is not going to show the guest the beauty and true meaning of Shabbos.

Menashe Katz <mkatz@sysnet.net>

Ohrnet Responds:

Our answer provided a tactful alternative to confrontation, while in no way compromising the sanctity or spirit of Shabbat.

Re: Ophir (Ohrnet Toldos):

Regarding usage of the name Ophir, it is possible the name currently common in Israel refers to the Biblical land known for its gold, and not the son of Yoktan. It is in vogue in Israel to name children after geographical locations. The names Arnon, Efrat, Kineret are a few that come to mind, and none of those names sound "too religious." A lot of common Israeli names are Biblical in origin, though some are hesitant to admit it.

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

Re: Teaching Them to Your Children:

Toda Rabba for all the great information. I'm a Director of Education at Temple Akiba in Culver City, California. I love what your web site has to offer. I pass it on to my teachers, and they pass it on to our 205 students. It helps us in the mitzvah of "Ve'shinantam Le'vanecha — You shall teach them to your children." Thank you again.

Miriam <Hamuda133@aol.com>

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