



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

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OHR SOMAYACH תנוח טאנענבאום קאלעדזש
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2000 WORRIES

Email@Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I am a new internet user. I have been exploring everything I (usually accidentally) click on. Anyway, I have been reading a lot of y2k [year 2000] doomsday info and it has caused me much anxiety! I realize much of it is a hysterical messianic reaction. My question (finally!) what is the Jewish response to y2k ?

What is the Jewish response to "the end of the world?" I am a reform Jew by choice, living in a rural Appalachian area. My only Jewish contact right now is the Hillel at the local university and I've not been very involved yet. Thank you for your time!

Dear Email@Withheld,

The Jewish people have survived for 3,500 years and we have experienced much worse than the Y2K bug. The destruction of our Temple and worldwide exile of an entire people was quite a cataclysm, the Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, the Black Death, the Holocaust, etc. And yet, here we are. I am a Jew living in Jerusalem (a miracle in and of itself), son of a holocaust survivor (another miracle) actively teaching Judaism to thousands of Jews around the world (another miracle). So our attitude would be that of Alfred E. Neuman in Mad Magazine which is "What, me worry?"

The Torah guarantees that there will always be Jews around observing, studying and teaching Judaism — the only thing that you have to worry about is will you be one of them?

FRIENDLY FAMILY

Email@Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

My husband and I have been increasing our level of Jewish observance. We have a Jewish home, try very hard to keep kosher, and lately I have begun studying the Torah and going to a beginners' service on Shabbat. My husband sometimes accompanies me. He is dyslexic, and with some difficulty has learned the brachot for bread and wine, and makes them on Shabbat. He buys the wine in our house, and it is generally non-kosher wine. Our friend told us you shouldn't make a bracha over non-kosher wine. When I repeated this to my husband (as he blessed non-kosher wine this past Shabbat) he became angry at me, and said don't you want to have a nice Shabbat? We are becoming more observant at different rates, and while my husband is happy and proud that I am studying the Torah, he is not as interested in studying as I am. I feel that our shalom bayit is at stake. Do you have any ideas about how to avoid the pitfalls on the road to becoming observant? I am sure that others have experienced this before us. Thank you.

Dear Email@Withheld,

What you really need is a mentor to speak with. Find a rabbi sensitive to these issues with whom you can freely talk. If you would like help in finding someone, tell me where you live and I can suggest someone.

However, I can offer some words of advice:

- Never criticize or preach regarding religious observance.
- Discuss any step that you plan on taking with your husband first.
- Try to involve him in study with you or at a class.
- Make anything to do with Torah as unthreatening, pleasant and non-imposing as possible.
- Be extra-careful in other areas of marriage to create and foster harmony.

In addition, I recommend the book *After The Return* by Mordechai Becher and Moshe Newman, Feldheim Publishers.

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.

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WHY IN THE WORLD IS THERE A WORLD?

Daniel Rabchinsky from Mexico City, Mexico
< derej@hotmail.com > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Hello, first let me extend my gratitude for sharing your wisdom in this way. The life we live is not only made for the 80 or so years that we are here; as I have been taught, it is like a passage for the world to come. But why did G-d give us this life instead of giving us our direct existence in the world to come, where we will experience pleasure multiplied by the millions? The reason is so that we appreciate what we have fought to get to. The thing is, why don't we appreciate things if they did not cost us anything? I'd say that it is because G-d made us that way; He can do it all. So the question is: Why didn't G-d make us in a way that we would appreciate everything even if we did not work for it, so that we could be "born" from the beginning in the world to come? Shalom.

Dear Daniel Rabchinsky,

Your question is asked by Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto in *The Way of G-d*, and is also addressed by Rabbi Yosef Karo in *Maggid Meisharim*. The gist of what they say is as follows: The purpose of Creation is *chesed*, kindness. G-d wants to bestow the greatest possible good upon created beings. The ultimate and greatest good is G-d Himself. Therefore, the ultimate good available to created beings is closeness to G-d. Closeness to God requires compatibility and *similarity* to G-d. Therefore beings must have free will and not be created already similar, as this would be *dissimilar* to G-d (i.e., G-d acts because He *chooses* to do so, not because He is coerced). So that the creatures (humans) must be in a world in which there is choice so that the human can be as "G-dlike" as possible. The good has to be internal not external, just as God is intrinsically good. The only way for us to internalize and be intrinsically good is to do it through challenge and free will, and therefore, this world was created.

CAREFUL DRESSER

Ira Widman from Widman, NJ < widman@idt.net > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Why is it prohibited to put on and take off two garments at the same time? It seems that it comes from a kabbalistic idea that I don't quite understand.

Dear Ira Widman,

The Ben Ish Chai explains that this is because a certain spiritual existence is situated around the human body and between the layers of garments he wears. It is a

sort of shielding against any spiritual mishap. One has to remove pieces of clothing one at a time for this entity to depart, and to put them on also one at a time for it to take its place again. If one removes two pieces of clothing at once he is "trapping" this entity which after being submitted to such a humiliation will not return again. Subsequently the human will be unguarded against spiritual mishap, i.e., forgetfulness.

SAY CHEESE!

Julia Gomberg from Brooklyn, NY
< jgomberg@collegeboard.org > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Please explain the halachot that are related to certain hard cheeses that require one to wait 6 hours before eating meat. If possible, please give the specific categories and names of such cheeses, and the reasons behind this halacha. Many thanks.

Dear Julia Gomberg,

Dairy products such as milk, cream cheese, cottage cheese, yoghurt, ice-cream, and butter require no waiting period before partaking of meat. However the mouth should be cleaned first.

According to Ashkenazic custom, one must wait about six hours after cheddar, Dutch or Swiss cheese, or other strong flavored cheeses before eating meat.

It is universally accepted that after *meat* there be a waiting period before eating dairy. Two reasons are given for this: Either because the meat exudes a taste for about 6 hours, or because meat stuck between the teeth is still considered meat until about 6 hours afterwards.

According to the first reason, the Ashkenazic (European Jewish) decisors (Rema, Mordechai, Maharam) maintain that one should also wait after eating cheeses that have a strong taste. Some authorities limit this to a cheese that has matured for at least 6 months, or that has worms in it, even if it is less than 6 months mature. In both cases the cheese is considered "strong tasting" and will give taste for 6 hours. Other authorities maintain (and this is the common custom) that one should wait after any strong tasting cheese even if not matured 6 months. Dutch, Swiss and cheddar cheeses are examples of this.

The Sephardi Jews (Middle Eastern and North African Jews) do not wait after cheese, as this stringency isn't mentioned in the Talmud.

Sources:

- Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah, 89:2
- Rema 89:2 & Aruch HaShulchan
- Turei Zahav ad loc. 4
- Shach and Taz, Yoreh Deah, 89:1

Yiddle Riddle

I enjoy Ohrnet very much, and always share it with a few friends at *shul*; we work on the *Yiddle Riddle* together, and (proudly) got the correct answer to the one a few weeks ago regarding the five fast days. Anyway, here's my entry:

"What verse in the Torah contains the same *shoresh* (root) four times in a row?"

Thanks, and keep up the good work *l'hagdil* Torah!

Catriel Blum, Toronto < catriel@stellapharm.com >

Answer next week...

THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

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

Re: Only 16 (Ohrnet Vaera):

In response to Yakov, the 16 year old NY City high school student who became observant after a summer in Israel: His letter struck a chord in me, since I went through virtually the same scenario...33 years ago! At that time there was very little around in the *baal tshuvah* movement, and it was a very difficult predicament, especially as a teenager, to have to give up one's friends who want to play ball or go to movies on Shabbat. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that as yet one has no new observant friends to take the place of old friends. This is a true test. I am happy to say that I now have 5 children, ranging in age from 11 to 21, all *b'nei Torah*, but I still remember how it felt to be in Yakov's position....

Name@Withheld

Ohrnet Responds:

The above is one of hundreds of responses we received regarding Yakov, each with information and offers of help. Ohrnet thanks each and every person who responded. The suggested resources are far too many to list, so we will offer just one. The overwhelming consensus of the respondents was that Yakov should contact NCSY, the National Conference of Synagogue Youth, under the auspices of the Orthodox Union, at 212-613-8233 or email: < ncsy@ou.org >. For other organizations and resources worldwide, see Jeff Seidel's Jewish Student Information Center's *Jewish Traveler's Resource Guide*.

Several people suggested that when he finishes high school, Yaakov should check out Ohr Somayach's post high school program, DERECH, which is tailor-made for people of his background. Now why didn't we think of that?

Re: Link to Us:

I am a *talmid* at Torah Academy. Thank you for helping me with my halachic questions. I could see how logging into the computer and seeing a question from someone many times could often pose an imposition. I have a request, if I may: I have a web page at ncsyphilly.homepage.nu, the official Philadelphia NCSY web page. I was thinking of setting up an "Ask the Rabbi" section. Would you mind if I linked your email with it?

Feivel Elfman < InstantELF@aol.com >

Ohrnet Responds:

Dear Feivel Elfman,

Thanks for your appreciation. We receive over 120 questions every day with only a few Rabbis answering! However we would be happy to try to accommodate you. We ask that you credit the section as "OHR SOMAYACH'S ASK THE RABBI." Others wishing to link to us, please contact us at < info@ohr.org.il > and list subject as "ASK THE RABBI".

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