



# Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

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Parashat Chukat /

Balak

## FROM MARS TO JERUSALEM

Jim Silver from Chicago, IL <silverjamese@yahoo.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
Assuming Mars is ever colonized and Jews live on Mars, will they need to pray UP to face Jerusalem? This question is based on the fact that the orbit of Mars is outside the Earth's orbit of the Sun.

Dear Jim Silver,

You've certainly asked your question to the right Rabbi: When I was in school, I took up space!

Even on Mars you wouldn't face upwards to pray because one should pray with his head slightly bowed and his eyes downward. Also, facing up towards earth might look like you were praying to a star. A Jewish no-no.

Of course, there may be other valid halachic views on this issue; therefore, when you get to Mars, ask the local Orthodox Rabbi.

### Sources:

- Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 95:2
- Mishna Berura 426:13

## BOSNIA CONVERSION

Shoshana Randolph-Friedly from Ft. Huachuca, AZ <sdrandolph@hotmail.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
I recently married a non-Jew who wishes to convert under Orthodox auspices. Unfortunately, at the moment we are both serving in the US Army, and are deployed in Bosnia. Is there a Rabbi out there who would be willing to correspond with my new husband and to help him learn while he is gone so that when he returns to the US he'll be that farther along in his learning process towards conversion? Any ideas you can contribute would be gratefully appreciated.

Dear Shoshana Randolph-Friedly,

Shalom. Please send me the name and contact information of the Rabbi or Rabbinic body supervising the conversion back in the

US. This will help me get a good picture of the situation and then I may be able to suggest a Rabbi with whom he can correspond.

Ohr Somayach's "Ask the Rabbi" service <info@ohr.org.il> is available for all questions; we try to respond to each person within 48 hours. And our web site has tons of material for seekers on all levels. <http://www.ohrnet.org>

## WRITE ON MOSES

Jeremy Harris from UK <JHarris@clifton-college.avon.sch.uk> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
The chances of Moses being able to write when he was given the Torah are very limited. Historical evidence suggests that Moses would not have known how to write and the only form of writing was in Egyptian hieroglyphs.

Dear Jeremy Harris,

I suggest you read some archaeological studies of the era; you will find that writing was quite well known and common. For example, see:

- Leah Bronner, *Biblical Personalities and Archaeology*, Keter Publishing, Jerusalem p. 52
- K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and the Old Testament*, 1970, pp. 136ff
- E. Neilson, *Oral Tradition*, 1954, p. 24

I also suggest you check out the literature (especially the Biblical Archaeology Review) on the discoveries of Nuzi, Mari, Amarna, Ras Shamra etc. that clearly show overwhelming evidence of the existence, use and non-specialist use of writing in the time of Moses and even preceding him.

For general verification and evidence of the historical truth of the Torah, see Permission to Receive by Lawrence Keleman, Living Up to the Truth by Dovid Gottlieb (downloadable from our website for free, at [www.ohr.org.il](http://www.ohr.org.il)). Also see our article on the web entitled "Historical Verification of the Torah." <http://www.ohrnet.org/ask/ask158.htm#Q1>

## GRAVE ISSUE

Name@Withheld wrote:

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](mailto: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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Dear Rabbi,

Regarding the daughter whose parents asked to be cremated [Ask the Rabbi #239 Shlach (in Israel) / Beha'alotcha (outside Israel)] — isn't there a halacha (Jewish law) to not listen when your parents ask you to do a sin? That is, honoring parents does not surmount other Torah laws. So wouldn't she be obliged to not fulfill her parents' request in this case?

Dear Name@Withheld,

You are correct: A child should not obey a parent's request to transgress the Torah. If it be in her power, she should see that the cremation not be done, even if this is against her parent's will.

This reminds me of a story, that I find frightening, one which illustrates the frightening evil to which a human can sink and, at the same time, the wisdom of our Sages: Not far from Luban, Russia, there lived a Jew who was a traitor to his people; he spent his life harassing the Jewish community by slandering them to the Russian authorities at every opportunity. At the end of his life, as he lay on his death bed, he summoned the Jewish burial society. "Bury me face down," he said. Then he died.

His most odd request was brought to the great Rabbi Moshe Feinstein. Rabbi Feinstein ruled that, despite the requirement to fulfill a dead person's final wishes, he must nevertheless be buried face-up in accordance with Jewish Law.

A few days after the funeral, the Russian authorities rode into town and summoned the Jewish burial society demanding that the recently buried body be dug up. Mystified, the Jews went out to the cemetery and began digging under the watchful eye of the Russians. When the body was unearthed and became visible, the Russians said, "Enough. Bury him again." Now the Jews couldn't contain themselves: "Please explain why you wanted to dig him up?" they asked.

"This man," the Russians explained, "was our friend. He was forever loyal to us. He told us that the Jews hate him so much for being our friend that they are going to bury him face down!"

## I LOVE SPAM®

Philipp <philipp\_666@hotmail.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Do you ever feel the need or the urge to eat pork?

Dear Philipp,

No, not really. But by the same token, I've never had a real urge for whale, camel, elephant, crow, or any unkosher meat. (Though I have eaten my hat on a number of occasions.)

I must admit, I'm personally repulsed by the thought of eating pork, although this may not be a "kosher" attitude! Our Sages teach us a fascinating idea: Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says, "Don't say 'I don't want to eat meat with milk...rather say 'I want to, but what can I do, G-d has decreed that I must not.'" So, it's OK — even desirable, perhaps — for a Jew to have the urge to eat pork, but nevertheless to refrain due to G-d's decree.

The famous Torah giant Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetsky was the head of the Torah Voda'ath Talumdic Academy in Brooklyn, New York. Near the academy was a non-kosher pizza shop. Walking past the pizza shop one day with his students, Rabbi Kaminetsky stopped, took a deep whiff and said "Ah! It smells so delicious!"

Sources:

• Torat Kohanim Parshat Kedoshim

## Yiddle Riddle

Who didn't eat or drink for upwards of 60 years? **Answer next week...**

## THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

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

### Re: Cremation (Ohrnet Shlach):

*I also am a ba'alas teshuva. My mother was niftar [passed away] on 8 Elul. She was a concentration camp survivor who had frequently stated that she wished to be cremated. She had also maintained a membership in the Workmen's Circle which happens to include a cemetery plot. After her passing, I had a kosher burial for her. I reasoned as follows: My mother had been meshuga (crazed) due to her camp experiences and even if firmly resolved regarding cremation, she was not making the choice with true sanity. My mother never renounced the cemetery plot associated with her membership, allowing me to believe that at least in part of her mind she was not truly committed to cremation. And after her death I felt I was committed to doing what was halachic with her body, that her soul in olam haba (the next world) would approve, now that it was no longer in the suffering state she had had during life.*

• Rukhl <Eissenstat@aol.com>

### Re: Espousing Religion (Ohrnet Shlach):

I feel compelled to write to the woman from DC who plans to start a family with her currently non-observant husband. I am, unfortunately, in a similar predicament...only that I became observant after we had children. I only wish that I had the foresight to question this potential problem before we started a family! Each relationship is so very different making it difficult to advise without knowing the couple personally. Your suggestions make sense, to tread carefully as the wife moves forward in observance, but sometimes it's easier said than done! As you mentioned, a woman can "set the tone" of the household thereby enabling her to raise the children traditionally Jewish. But this doesn't take into account the potentially lonely existence one feels when your spouse is basically traveling down a different road in life. Many aspects of Judaism involve the entire family and when the husband isn't there or is there only grudgingly, it can begin to take its toll, even on one's own *Yiddishkeit*, *chas v'sholom*. Even if the husband is tolerant of her "religious activities," both sides will undoubtedly harbor feelings of "why me?" resentment. I'm not even mentioning the issues which arise when you're raising boys and the difficulties of not only not having a husband who will serve as a *frum*, observant male role model, but who can have a negative impact Jewishly (*chas v'sholom*). I caution this woman to REALLY think this through — not only by trying to define her own life's goals but attempting to foresee the possible actions and reactions her husband can have to this new lifestyle which he never chose to embrace.

• Name@Withheld

**Re: Q&A:**

Many young and old teens, including myself, are in the middle of studying for finals. Is it possible to add to your website a *chumash* and *navi* (*Five Books and Prophets*) question sheet and answer for all weekly Torah Portions? Also is it possible to use words more understandable for us young readers of your site. Thank you.

• *Name@Withheld from Miami Beach, Florida*

Dear Name@Withheld,

Thanks for your confidence that we can help you get good grades! We do have PARSHA Q&A on our site with 20 questions and answers on every weekly Torah portion. We don't have *navi* or *haftara* questions yet. Good idea! (although you will probably graduate before we actually get around to it!) Regarding your suggestion that we use more understandable words, I agree. As I always say: Eschew obfuscuity! Salutations!