



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

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CORPORATE HEADS

Anonymous wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I'm 22 and work in a totally non-Jewish business setting in Manhattan where I've worked for a year. I wear a yarmulke to work every day. I feel that wearing a yarmulke here will prevent me from moving up in the company, as much of my job involves seeing potential clients and I am starting to think that perhaps an outright religious article like a yarmulke might make them uncomfortable. Also, my co-workers treat me differently and do not accept me so much. The "damage" has been done in this office, so I am thinking of leaving to another office and not wearing a yarmulke there. What are your thoughts on this, halachically and philosophically? This has been bothering me for a while.

Dear Anonymous,

To get ahead, or to cover your head: That is your question.

The Shulchan Aruch writes that a head covering is an obligation during prayer and something that one "should do" at other times. Some later authorities suggest that a head covering has gained the status of Torah Law due to the

prohibition against "going in the ways of non-Jews," because the non-Jews bare their heads as a sign of honor.

In certain cases, there is room for leniency if wearing a yarmulke causes a financial loss. But let me tell you a story: The Rabbi of Berditchev once saw a man running. "Where are you running?" he asked. "To my livelihood." "How do you know your livelihood doesn't lie in the other direction and you're running away from it?" said the Rabbi.

Who knows? Maybe for every client you "lose" because of your yarmulke, you may gain two clients who respect you specifically for the integrity and courage you display by wearing a yarmulke.

A yarmulke is a very powerful reminder of your Jewish identity. It seems to me a major mistake to cast it off, even if only at work. To wear a yarmulke is to proclaim "I'm a proud Jew," and it makes you worthy of extra-special Divine protection and blessing, especially today when so many Jews are assimilating into oblivion.

Sources:

- Talmud Kiddushin 31a; Shabbat 118b
- Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 8 & 92, and Taz
- Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, Igrot Moshe, Orach Chaim, vols. 1 & 4; and Choshen Mishpat, vol. 1

Yiddle Riddle

LAST WEEK we wrote:

I am a *levi*. There is one thing I have never witnessed in my entire adult life, and I never will either. *Yisraelim* sometimes see it, so do *kohanim*, but me and my fellow *levi'im*? Never! What is it?

Answer:

I am told that if there is no *levi* present during the Torah reading, the *kohen* honored by being called first to the Torah stays up and receives the second honor as well. At least that's what I've been told — I've never seen it, though, and I never will!

Riddle courtesy of Eliyahu Shiffman, Beit Shemesh, Israel < sarash1@netvision.net.il >

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Ask The Rabbi is written by Rabbi Moshe Lazerus

Rabbi

Avrohom Lefkowitz,

General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman

Production Design: Eli Ballon

and other Rabbis at Ohr Somayach Institutions / Tanenbaum College, Jerusalem, Israel.

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☎ 22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103, Jerusalem Israel

☎ 38 East 29th Street 8th floor, New York, NY 10016, USA

☎ 613 Clark Avenue West, Thornhill, Ontario L4J 5V3, Canada

☎ 972-2-581-0315

☎ 1-212-213-3100

☎ 1-905-886-5730

☎ 972-2-581-2890

☎ 1-212-213-8717

☎ 1-905-886-6065

✉ info@ohr.org.il

✉ RZCorlin@aol.com or estern@Aol.com

✉ Somayach@MSN.com

THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

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

Re: In The Flesh Again (Ohrnet Shoftim):

I think it is only fair to mention that a belief in reincarnation is not mandatory. After all, Sa'adia Gaon did not believe in reincarnation. It is one of those optional beliefs that we can embrace if we are so inclined.

Michael Katz <M613K@aol.com>

I was surprised by your reference to reincarnation in Judaism. I thought Hindus were the reincarnists?

Stan <lx2000@ix.netcom.com>

Ohrnet Responds:

Dear Stan,

We do not discard a belief simply because it is believed by Hindus, pagans, or others who subscribe to a false idea system. As an extreme example, we do not discard our belief that two plus two equals four because they also believe so.

Furthermore, note that Abraham, the founder of Judaism, had six sons from his wife Ketura to whom he "gave gifts ...and sent eastward to the land of the East" (*Genesis 25:3-6*). The Talmud explains that these "gifts" were gifts of kabbalistic knowledge; therefore, we shouldn't be totally surprised to find parallels between our respective idea systems.

Re: Revenge Of The Killer Chickens (Ohrnet Re'eh):

You wrote that "preying on other living things is an indication that a bird is non-kosher." I believe that many kosher birds eat insects and worms.

Julie Stampnitzky, Rehovot, Israel
<julie@dapsas1.weizmann.ac.il>

Ohrnet Responds:

The term "preying on living things" needs to be defined. Halacha states that a bird is not kosher if it is "dorais." "Dorais" basically means to trample, but the authorities differ as to its exact halachic definition. Rashi says it refers to a bird that eats its prey while stepping on it to keep it from moving. Rabbeinu Tam says that it refers to a bird that hunts animals and eats them live, and bugs, flies and worms are not included as "animals" in this regard; Ramban states that "dorais" refers to those birds which stick their claws into their prey and trample them. By any of these definitions, chickens are kosher, even though they eat worms and bugs.

Sources:

- Rambam Hilchot Ma'achalot Asurot 1:16
- Magid Mishneh Ibid.

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