



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

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BLAST IT!

Esther S. from Miami, Florida healingmed@aol.com > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

What did Sisera have to do with the Jews and the concept of 100 shofar blasts? What is the correlation between Sisera and the shofar blasts?

Dear Esther S.,

Sisera, the Assyrian general who fought the Jews, was killed by Yael as he fled the battlefield. The midrash tells us that Sisera's wicked mother cried one hundred and one tears when she heard the news of her son's death. We sound one hundred shofar blasts to counteract these tears which she shed in anger and pain at her son's defeat at the hand of the Jews. The one tear that cannot be erased is the tear shed out of pure love of a mother for her son.

According to the Sephardic tradition, 101 blasts are sounded. This is one more than the numerical value of the letters "samech" and "mem," which spell the name of the most harmful angel. Adding one gives us the numerical equivalent of "Michael," the name of the most "righteous" angel.

The Yemenite tradition is to sound only 41 blasts.

HAIL TO THE CHIEF

Noreen from Darwin, Australia
theblueheron@hotmail.com > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I am not Jewish and my boss is Jewish. I would like to wish him a "happy new year" but want to do it respectfully. How do I do this? Thanks.

Dear Noreen,

The classic greeting for the Jewish New Year is "Have a good and sweet New Year." By the way, the Jewish custom is to eat honey at the New Year to underline this idea!

NATIONAL HOLIDAY

Shannon Prissel from River Falls, Wisconsin
< barb.kuss@stpaul.com > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Do you think Rosh Hashanah should be a national holiday in the United States? Why?

Dear Shannon Prissel,

I don't think Rosh Hashanah should be a national holiday in the United States. When the Jewish kids get out of school on Rosh Hashanah, while all their friends are in school, it makes the Jewish kids realize that they are special. The same can be said for Jews in a non-Jewish work environment; observing Rosh Hashanah distinguishes them as Jews. In our age of rampant assimilation and intermarriage, making Rosh Hashanah a national holiday might further weaken Jewish identity, removing what for many is the only practice that sets them apart as Jews.

HOLY DAY IN SOURBAY

Irene < irene@gilat.com > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

What is the nearest synagogue inside or outside Indonesia for my colleague who is a religious person on a business trip which straddles Yom Kippur in Indonesia?

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 Lefkowitz, Rabbi Mordechai Becher and other Rabbis at Ohr Somayach Institutions / Tanenbaum College, Jerusalem, Israel.

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☎ info@ohr.org.il
☎ RZCorlin@aol.com or estern@Aol.com
☎ Somayach@MSN.com

Dear Irene,

I'm sending you two addresses, both from Sourbay Indonesia. They are taken from Jeff Seidel's Jewish Student Traveler's Guide.

- Synagogue Kajoon, 4-6 Djalan Kajoon.

Phone: 31-545-2815

- Elias Nissim, 43 Gemanok. Phone: 31-577-770

BETTER NOT RED

David Mercer from St. Johns, Newfoundland
< dmercer@nfld.com > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

We are a small shul without a rabbi. Last Shabbos the question was asked "Why does one not wear the colour red on Rosh Hashana?" Can you tell us? Todah.

Dear David Mercer,

Red symbolizes blood and Divine judgment (which may, G-d forbid, end with death). White symbolizes milk, goodness, sustenance and mercy. Therefore, on Rosh Hashana it is customary to avoid wearing red and to prefer white, in order that we be judged with mercy and merit a happy and prosperous year. This is not a law, but rather a custom.

ISRAEL PROPHETS

Philip Shapiro from Johannesburg, South Africa
< philipjs@milkyway.co.za > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

A question about Jonah. Jonah was commanded to prophesy to the Assyrians. The Malbim explains that all prophecy is for the benefit of Israel, and that Jonah's prophecy to the Assyrians was in fact for the benefit of Israel — that since the Assyrians were destined to be the "rod of chastisement" for Israel, they had to be rebuked to repent before they could chastise Israel.

How does one answer the following question? The Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Greeks and the Romans did not receive Jewish prophets to rebuke them to repentance before they afflicted Israel. And it is said that Titus was a totally wicked man. Why did he not have to repent before destroying the Second Temple?

Dear Philip Shapiro,

According to the Malbim, the reason the Assyrians had to repent is that otherwise they would have been completely destroyed due to their sins, and then they could not have been the instrument to punish the Jewish people. (This, says the Malbim, explains Yonah's reluctance to rebuke them; since by doing so, he enabled them to survive and become the "rod of punishment" against the Jews.) Even though Titus himself and the nations you mentioned were evil, they were apparently not yet deserving of total destruction.

By the way, the Egyptians did indeed receive rebuke from Jewish prophets: Moshe and Aharon repeatedly warned Pharaoh of the impending plagues. Furthermore, Greece and Rome subjugated the Jews after the period of prophecy had already ended.

Yiddle Riddle

The Talmud says that you say a blessing when you see a friend whom you haven't seen in a long time. As the Shulchan Aruch states: "One who sees his friend after 30 days says '*Shehechyanu*' (the happiness blessing); and after (not having seen him for) 12 months he blesses '*Mechayeh Hametim*' (Blessed are You...who revives the dead)."

What is different about not seeing a friend for a year that it requires a different blessing, the blessing of the revival of the dead?

ANSWER:

Every year on Rosh Hashana we are judged regarding whether we will live or die. So if a person hasn't seen his friend during any normal 12 month period, his friend has undergone a life or death judgment and been thus far saved from it.

Source:

- Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 225:1
- Mishna Berura, Ibid. 4

THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

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

Jewish Roots in Poland:

I live in a city where there is no Jewish community. I'm very happy though that I found the Ohr Somayach Interactive website, a place where I can learn more about my Jewish roots. Thank you.

Karol Brejna, Koszalin, Poland <kazelot@thenut.eti.pg.gda.pl>

not work if it had not been created from the beginning. Why? Just as creation was "yesh me'ayin — something from nothing" —which could happen only in the first six days — so is *Teshuva* "ayin me'yesh — nothing from something." That is, something that exists disappears totally. This power also could only be created during the first six days.

Teshuva — Something from Nothing:

Regarding your mention of *teshuva* (repentance) in connection with creation, there is another, more profound connection. *Teshuva* could

Zvi Freund, New York NY <miltonf@villagenet.com>

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