



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

This Issue Contains:

1. Goodyear
2. Here Comes Baby!
3. Yiddle Riddle
4. Public Domain



GOODYEAR

Debbi Gjunik <gjunik@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I heard recently that some great Rebbe in Jerusalem said that this year, 5760, will be a difficult, (G-d forbid) hard year for the world in general. Are there — in the gemara or various different sources — opinions to back up this claim? Have you heard of it? Doesn't 5760 stand for "Tehai Shnat Segulot — It should be a year of treasures?"

Dear Debbi Gjunik,

One of today's great Torah Sages, Rabbi Yosef Shalom Eliyashiv, in regard to questions such as yours, said the following: "Those who know don't say; those who say don't know." He meant that those who purport to definitively predict the future are only speculating; anyone truly wise enough to know the future is also wise enough to know how much to reveal, when, and to whom.

However, some interesting things have been said about the year 5760:

In Jewish law, the number 5760 represents purity. Thus, one of the kabbalistic writings (Chesed L'Avraham, written around 200 years ago) saw 5760 as the year in which G-d will "remove the spirit of impurity from the land." (*Zecharia* 13:2)

The connection between 5760 and purity is as follows: In Jewish law, ritual purity is achieved by immersing in a pool of naturally gathered waters called a *mikveh*. Now, for a *mikveh* to be valid it must have a certain minimum amount of water. The Oral Torah (the unbroken chain of information going back to Mount Sinai) teaches that this minimal amount is 5760 "egg-volumes." Thus, 5760 symbolizes a *mikveh* and hence the removal of impurity.

(An "egg-volume" is the amount that spills from a totally full cup when you put an egg in it. Ancient *mikvehs* discovered in Israel, such as those at Qumran and Massada, are built precisely to this standard. One *se'ah* = 144 eggs;

hence, a minimum 40 *se'ah mikveh* = 40 x 144 egg-volumes, or 5760.)

Another source, the *Yalkut Reuveni*, wrote that 240 years before the year 6000, the world will be engulfed by a flood. But didn't G-d promise Noah never again to flood the entire world with water? What kind of "flood," then, is being referred to?

Earthquakes in Mexico City, Taiwan, Turkey and Peru; deadly storms in Central America; typhoon in Japan; volcano alerts in Ecuador and the Philippines. This flurry of tragedies — prompted CNN to ask "Is There a Link Between Recent Natural Disasters?" Add to this a nuclear meltdown in Japan, the subway tragedy in London and a military coup in nuclear-capable Pakistan; all of these which occurred in the few weeks since the year's beginning on Rosh Hashana. Could these events be the rumblings of a deluge of disaster?

Or will the "millennium bug" bring an ocean of information crashing down around us?

The possibilities are endless. Let's pray for another possibility, that a flood of love and kindness will engulf the globe, and that "the earth will be full of G-dly knowledge, just as the waters cover the ocean." (*Isaiah* 11:9)

HERE COMES BABY!

Name@Withheld from Chicago, Illinois wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

To my continual joy and miraculous wonder, I am pregnant with our first child. Is there anything I should or can be doing during this exciting time to help prepare, spiritually, for the incredible job of parenthood & motherhood? Thank you for your consideration and for the weekly dose of humor and wisdom!

Dear Name@Withheld,

Judaism teaches that the influences surrounding the baby in the womb have a profound effect.

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So avoid negative influences, like those on television and in movies. You don't want your developing baby's first sensations to be ones of violence and immorality. Instead, listen to inspiring music, study about Judaism, talk to positive people, etc.

The Talmud relates that one expectant mother used to go to the houses of Torah Study and ask the scholars to pray that her unborn baby should one day become a Torah scholar. And when her baby was born, she brought him in his crib to the Torah academies so that his ears should absorb sounds of Torah study. He grew up to be one of the great Sages of the Talmud, Rabbi Yehoshua.

And remember, your baby is made from the food you eat. So, make sure your baby is kosher! Kosher food has a positive spiritual effect on the developing fetus, and non-kosher food has the opposite effect.

Someone once asked a Rabbi, "When do you Jews start educating your children?" The Rabbi answered, "Twenty years before they're born!" More than anything else, the example set by the parents is the greatest influence on a child's life. Begin now a renewal of your own commitment to the study and practice of Judaism.

May Hashem bless you with an easy pregnancy and birth, and with children who are a constant source of joy to you and your family!

Sources:

- Avot 2:5 and Commentaries
- Rabbeinu Bechaya, Vayikra 11:43
- Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 81:7

Yiddle Riddle

Where in *davening* (liturgy) do you say 24 words in a row that end with the letter "*chaf*?"

Answer next week...

Riddle Submitted by Shlomo Zev Friedman <geno@netvision.net.il>

THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

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

Re: Shaving With an Electric Shaver During *Chol Hamo'ed* (Ohrnet Succot 5760):

I would like to point out that Rav Moshe Feinstein, *zatzal*, (*Orach Chaim 1, page 288*) wrote: "It is therefore clear, in my humble opinion, that in our time and in our country that people regularly shave their beards each day, or even every second day, or even every third day, there is no prohibition (to continue to do so on Chol Hamo'ed). However, in any event, I am not accustomed to permit it except if there is great need or great discomfort. And if someone wishes to rely on this only for reasons of looking good, he should not be chastised, as the basic law is that it is permitted." Rav Y. B.

Soloveitchik, *zatzal*, went even further (*Nefesh Harav, Rav Tzvi Shechter, page 189*); he reasoned that it is permitted to shave in this instance, similar to other instances of "*o'neis*;" [not under his control] since this stubble was not in existence before *Yom Tov*, it could not have been shaved. Since it is permitted, he reasoned, it is a mitzvah and an obligation for people who shave daily to also shave during *Chol Hamo'ed* so as not to be unbecoming during *Chol Hamo'ed* and before the last day/days of *Yom Tov*.

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