



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

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SELLING Futures

Eli Silberstein <rebeli@juno.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Recently, I became aware of a situation involving two elementary school aged children (each about 10 years old), in which one of them signed over to the other, in a written contract, his eternal reward. Is such a contract deemed valid, or is it nullified considering the young age of the participants?

Dear Eli Silberstein,

If it came down to actually judging this case, it would need to come before a "dayan" (Torah judge) in the presence of the two boys, or their representatives. I will merely offer some ideas to be used as a general guideline; and my answer is not to be thought of as a definitive ruling.

A cursory glance at the Shulchan Aruch implies very strongly that this contract is null and void due to the fact that the parties are minors. There are a few other reasons as well which would say that this contract is void.

However, I would advise you to try to have these boys annul the contract, regardless of its validity. The action of the seller, even though he is young, shows a lack of seriousness regarding his eternal reward; this attitude may become ingrained unless some action is taken now. This is an opportunity to correct him and explain to him that eternal reward is not something that is for sale.

Additionally, if he continues with the idea that the other person will take his eternal reward, then it won't faze him to commit sins or to abstain from doing *mitzvot*, as he thinks the other person will get his eternal reward.

BARAK & MUBARAK

Al Pachman <iluvjudi@mindspring.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

It is interesting that the head of the Egyptian state is named Mubarak and the head of the Jewish state is named Barak. Is it "all in the family" in the Middle East?

Dear Al Pachman,

Many names sound similar even though the people aren't related. (For example, you're not related to Al Pacino or to Pac Man, are you?)

"Mubarak" is Arabic for "blessed" (like the Hebrew "mevurach"). "Barak" is Hebrew for "lightning."

But I think your observation is astute. It's interesting to note that Israel's chief justice is also named Barak. Note that when George Washington was president of the United States, England's king was also George. And Israel recently had two prime ministers one after the other, both named Yitzchak: Yitzchak Shamir and Yitzchak Rabin. And today in the US, both the president and defense secretary are named William. Perhaps people with certain names are just destined to rule at certain times!

THE BIG LIE

Michael Green <stisrael@barak-online.net> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Can G-d lie? If so, then everything the Torah says maybe is a lie [50% chance it is]. Also maybe Hashem does not care if we do His commandments, and that what He tells us do to is a lie [and He is being cynical]. Please explain. Thank you!

Dear Michael Green,

No, G-d can't lie or be cynical. G-d is All-Merciful and Benevolent, and no form of imperfection or cynicism can be attributed to Him.

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There is an example in the Torah where G-d told Avraham information which wasn't "the whole truth." When 90-year old Sarah heard she was going to have a child, she expresses her surprise by saying "After withering, will I become young again? And my husband (Avraham) is old!" When G-d told Avraham what Sarah had said, G-d altered the information somewhat. Instead of saying "my husband is old" G-d told Avraham that Sarah said "I am old."

But even here, G-d didn't lie, but rather paraphrased the first part of Sarah's statement in which she describes herself as old, and omitted the second part where she calls Avraham old. This was done for the sake of the greater goal of peace between husband and wife.

Source:

- Bava Metzia 87a
- Bereishet 18,12-13

FINGERS CROSSED

Sherry from Baltimore wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I've heard that it's forbidden to cross the fingers of the right hand with the fingers of the left hand. This sounds a bit baffling. And I see Orthodox Jews who do this and wonder if they are ignorant of a

prohibition or perhaps just not always aware of the state of their fingers. Thank you for this wonderful service.

Dear Sherry,

Crossing the fingers isn't really a prohibition, but it is mentioned in traditional sources as something to avoid. Here is the explanation of one commentary: "The right side represents Divine mercy whereas the left represents Divine strict judgment, and it is inappropriate for a person to do something that signifies a mixing of these distinct attributes of G-d. It is even a dangerous thing to do, and therefore one should be careful to avoid this practice." This is a deep kabbalistic concept that we cannot truly understand.

I asked a renowned Jerusalem rabbi who said that if you aren't generally concerned about intertwining your fingers then there's no need to be concerned about this. Only if one is *generally* careful not to cross fingers because of it being wrong or even dangerous does one need to be *always* careful not to do so.

Sources:

- Shmirat Haguf V'Hanefesh 78:1

Yiddle Riddle

Last week we asked:

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

Answer:

In *Kiddush Levana* — Sanctifying the New Moon — we say the verse: "*Baruch Yotzraych, Baruch Osaych, Baruch Kohnaych, Baruch Bohraych*" three times.

Riddle and answer submitted by Shlomo Zev Friedman <geno@netvision.net.il>

THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

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

Re: **What Levi'im Never See (Ohrnet Ki Teitze):**

In a recent Yiddle Riddle, you asked "What is it that a *levi* never sees in his entire adult life," and answered "if there is no *levi* present, a *kohen* is called to the Torah instead of a *levi*. A *levi* never sees this."

There would appear to be a number of exceptions to this; here's one: We do not call up the

Chasan Torah or *Chasan Bereishis* (the ones honored with ending and beginning the year's Torah reading) more than once on *Simchas Torah*. Therefore, if the *Chasan Torah* is a *levi*, even if he is the only *levi* present, he is not called up for the second *aliya* (reading) of *VeZot HaBeracha*; rather, the *kohen* called for the first *aliyah* remains there in place of a *levi* for the second *aliyah* as well. The *levi* is not even required to leave the synagogue for that second *aliyah*. (*Ta'amei Haminhagim* 831, in footnote citing

Orchot Chayim)

Stephen Phillips. < stephenp@cix.co.uk >

was sitting *shiva* (in mourning) and no other *levi* was present.

Lawrence Myers < lawrm@globalnet.co.uk >

A *levi* could see this if it's a fast day and he is not fasting. In such a case, he would not be called up to the Torah.

Zvi Freund < milonf@villagenet.com >

A *levi* could also have seen it if, G-d forbid, he

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