



# Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

## This Issue Contains:

1. Two Heads, One Body, Three Questions
2. Yiddle Riddle



Ephraim from Jerusalem wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Time magazine (March 25, '96) had an article about a six-year old girl, or two six-year old girls rather, with two heads and one body. They're like 2 totally different people with different personalities and preferences. They have separate urges to eat, sleep and go to the bathroom. What if anything does Judaism say about such a situation. Is there any source in the Talmud that talks about this? Would they be considered one person or two?

Dear Ephraim,

Ever hear the phrase, 'Nothing's new under the sun?'

The Talmud records an exchange in which Phlmo asked Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, "A person with two heads, upon which head does he place the *tefillin*?" Rabbi Yehuda thought Phlmo was merely jesting, when suddenly someone arrived and announced, "My wife had a baby with two heads! How much must I give for the redemption of the first-born?"

The Talmud concludes that the father must give double the normal amount. The Torah says the firstborn must be redeemed at "five *sela'im* per head." So here, where there are two heads, the father must give ten *sela'im*.

From the above, you can't necessarily extrapolate to other cases, because there are two opposite ways to understand it:

- Since the father gives double, they must be considered two people.
- They are one person who simply pays extra for the extra head.

According to the Midrash, a two-headed man lived in the time of King Solomon. He fathered six normal children and a seventh with two heads like himself. When the father died, the son with two heads came before King Solomon demanding a double share of the

inheritance. King Solomon covered one head and poured hot water on the other. "Ouch!" both heads cried out. From this King Solomon meant to show that genetically they are one, and should be judged as one for inheritance purposes. The Talmud, however, does not record this incident.

The Zohar records a tradition about the descendants of Cain, stating that they were born with two heads.

Actual instances of conjoined twins are found in the works *Sha'ar HaShamayim* (Ralbag 1547), *Cheshek Shlomo* (1773) and *Shvut Yaakov* (Rabbi Yaakov Reisher of Prague, 1739) and others.

The *Shvut Yaakov* himself saw twin boys, normal in all ways, but whose heads were joined side by side. In such a case, he writes, they are certainly separate people. He distinguishes between this case and the case in the Talmud where the two heads share one body.

There's really nothing new under the sun: Adam and Eve, says the Talmud, were created as a single male/female being with two faces. The subsequent creation of Eve was actually the splitting of the male and female into two separate parts!

## Sources:

- Tractate *Menachot* 37a, Tractate *Berachot* 61a
- *Kohelet* 1:9
- *Sefer Zohar* quoted in *Seder Dorot*, Tanaim and Amoraim, Phlmo
- *Shita Mekubetzet* to *Menachot* 37a, & *Binyan Shlomo*
- *Shvut Yaakov*, *Orach Chaim* 1:4

## Yiddle Riddle

Three members of the Jewish People whose names are mentioned in Torah (and were alive at the time) did not go out of Egypt during the Exodus.

*Who are they?*

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Issue #104 - 4 May 1996

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