Then the Bnei Yisrael dwell in the Land of Israel, its first fruits are to be taken to the Temple and given to the Kohen in a ceremony which expresses recognition that it is Hashem who guides the history of the Jewish People throughout all the ages. This passage forms one of the central parts of the Haggadah that we read at the Seder. On the last day of Pesach of the fourth and the seventh years of the seven-year cycle of tithe, a person must recite a confession that he has indeed distributed the tithes to the appropriate people in the prescribed manner.

With this mitzvah Moshe concludes the commandments that Hashem has told him to give to The Jewish People. Moshe exhorts them to walk in Hashem’s ways, because they are set aside as a treasured people to Hashem. When the Bnei Yisrael cross the Jordan River they are to make a New Commitment to the Torah. Huge stones are to be erected and the Torah written on them in the seventy primary languages of the world, after which they are to be covered over with a thin layer of plaster. Half the tribes will stand on Mount G’rizim, and half on Mount Eval and the Levim will stand in a valley between the two mountains and recite twelve commandments and all the people will answer “Amen” to the blessings and the curses. Moshe then details the blessings that will be bestowed on the Bnei Yisrael. These blessings are both physical and spiritual. However if the Jewish People do not keep the Torah, Moshe details a chilling picture of destruction, resulting in exile and wandering among the nations.
Grave Issue

Edward Karan from BA/FAS New York <ekarannn@colybrand.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I was reading an article in a magazine on archaeology commenting how the “fanatic” group, ATRA KADDAISHA, hampers excavations when graves are unearthed in Israel. I’m interested why we can’t relocate graves. The article quoted a Talmudic source that in the times of the Mishna, cities that were expanding were allowed to relocate a grave site.

Another thing: I imagine that graves are considered ‘holy’ places, but at the same time they are “impure.” I am looking for a good explanation on how something can be both holy and impure at the same time? Shalom.

Dear Eddie,

Speaking of archeology, did you hear that they discovered a three thousand year old city in Israel with evidence that everyone in the city had cellular phones? That’s right. They searched the entire city and didn’t find a single telephone wire!

But back to your question. In general, it’s forbidden to move a body, even bones, from one grave to another. Besides the disrespect to the deceased, the departed soul experiences pain when his body is dug up.

In certain situations, however, moving graves is permitted. For example, when the move is for the good of the departed, such as moving him to his family plot. And as you wrote, one may move graves located in an area needed by the public — provided no alternate site exists.

However, the remains must be treated with respect and reburied in an assigned plot. Not just thrown away or put on display.

Based on photos and eye-witness accounts of construction sites and archeological digs in Israel, bones are tossed around, piled into bags, and discarded in a most irreverent way. The members of the Atra Kaddisha are simply trying to safeguard the sanctity of their ancestors’ graves. (Atra Kaddisha means ‘the holy place.’)

You asked, “how can graves be holy yet impure?” Man is made of two aspects: Body and soul. While the dead body is impure, the soul, which is still related to the body, is holy.

Sources:

- Shlashchan Aruch - Yoreh Deah 363:1
- Gesher Hachaim vol. I ch. 2627; vol. II ch. 20:21
- Talmud Yerushalmi Moed Katan 2:4
- Ramban, Torat Ha-adam
- Ohr Zaruah 419
- Tshuvat HaRashba I:369
- Rabbeinu Yerucham I:229-230
- Rambam Hilchot Aivel 14:12-26
- Talmud Yerushalmi Moed Katan 2:4
- Ramban, Torat Ha-adam
- Ohr Zaruah 419
- Tshuvat HaRashba I:369
- Rabbeinu Yerucham I:229-230
- Rambam Hilchot Aivel 14:12-26

Yiddle Riddle

Which Tractate’s name is the antonym of the name of the Order (seder) of which it is part?

Answer next week
**Bird Food**

After he had pronounced a drought upon the idol worshipping King Ahab of Israel, the Prophet Elyahu was directed by Hashem to seek refuge in a remote location where food would miraculously be brought to him by ravens. The ravens indeed brought him bread and meat each morning and evening.

But where did they bring the meat from and how did the prophet know it was kosher?

The meat, says the Talmud, was from the kitchens of Ahab. But Ahab was a committed idol worshipper, so how could meat from an animal slaughtered by him or one of his idol worshipping servants be considered kosher?

This is proposed as a support for the opinion expressed by Rabbi Anan in the name of the Sage Shmuel that the slaughtering done by a Jew who worships idols is kosher. But the Talmud rejects this proof because the meat may indeed not have been kosher, but was explicitly permitted in this extraordinary situation by Hashem when He informed the prophet that the ravens would feed him.

Tosefos raises an interesting problem. In the Talmud’s initial assumption that the meal of an animal slaughtered by an idolater is indeed kosher there is still a problem as to how the prophet could bring meat which had disappeared from sight since there is a rabbinic injunction prohibiting idolater-slaughtered meat until the conclusion was reached that even the halacha was abrogated temporarily by Divine command.

The distinction made by Tosefos is thus explained by Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh Chayos: When the Torah wrote that “The Torah is not in heaven” it ruled that prophecy could not interfere in the halachic process delegated to human intellect. But a prophet may, through prophecy, clarify the facts of a case. The Talmud therefore assumed that Elyahu relied on his prophecy to ascertain that the meat indeed came from a Jewish kitchen, but not to abrogate the halacha prohibiting idolater-slaughtered meat until the conclusion was reached that even the halacha was abrogated temporarily by Divine command.

**River Talk**

On his way to perform the great mitzvah of ransoming captives Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair found his journey blocked by the impassable Ginai River.

“Part your waters Ginai,” requested the sage, “so that I may pass.”

“You are going forward to do the will of your Master,” replied the reluctant river, “and I flow on to do the will of my Master. There is no guarantee that you will succeed in your mission (since the captors may not consent to the ransoming – Rashi) while I will certainly succeed in mine (the Divine order for all rivers to flow to the sea – Rashi).”

Only after the sage threatened to dry up the river did it finally part its waters to allow him and his company to pass through.

The problem raised by this and other sections of the Talmud concerning speech by inanimate objects such as the river is resolved by Tosefos in two different approaches:

1. It was the angel in charge of seas and rivers who engaged the sage in this dialogue. Maharsha expands this idea to explain the statement made by the grasses at the time of Creation (Chullin 60a). Every blade of grass, say our Sages, has an angel in charge of it who commands it to grow from the earth. It was these angels, he concludes, that did the talking just as the Ginai River’s angel did here.

2. No dialogue actually took place. The Talmud is describing Rabbi Pinchas’ thought process as to why the river was initially reluctant to part its waters. While this approach may be somewhat difficult to apply to the statement of the grass, it provides a perfect explanation for the dialogue between Rabbi Eliezer ben Durdai and the mountains, heaven, earth, sun, moon and stars (Avodah Zarah 17a).

**Parsha QA & I Didn’t Know That!**

1. When did the obligation to bring bikkurim (first fruits) begin?
2. From which crops must one bring bikkurim?
3. What does ‘anisa v’amarta mean (verse 26:5)?
4. How does one designate bikkurim?
5. Who shakes the basket containing the bikkurim?
6. “An Arami tried to destroy my father...” (26:5) Who was that Arami?
7. Starting when in the year are bikkurim brought? Until when are the special verses recited?
8. Someone declaring that he separated trumah and maaser says “and I didn’t forget (26:13).” What didn’t he forget?
9. Eleven curses were spoken on Mt. Eval. What is the significance of this number?
10. What were the Jewish People to do with the 12 stones on Mount Eval?

1. Six tribes were to stand on Mount Eval, and six on Mount Grizim. Who and what were in the middle?
2. Who “causes the blind to go astray?”
3. How does one “strike another secretly?”
4. Why is the word “ashteros” used in reference to sheep?
5. How is the manner of expressing the curses in Parshas Bechukosai more severe than in this week’s Parsha?
6. What is meant by “the Jewish People will become a proverb?”
7. “...And there you will serve other gods...” What does this mean?
8. “In the morning you shall say, ‘If only it were (last) evening’ and in the evening you will say, ‘If only it were (this) morning’ (28:67).” Why?
9. To which tribe did Moshe give the Torah first?
10. How long does it take to understand the depth of one’s teacher’s wisdom?

‘Vidui’ is a word usually used in reference to confession of sin. Why, then, is the declaration that one has properly given tithes to the Levi’im called ‘Vidui Ma’aser’?

**I Didn’t Know That!**

The parsha of bikkurim contains the name of Hashem 13 times, corresponding to the 13 Attributes of Hashem’s Kindness. Similarly, the 13 Attributes and the mitzva of bikkurim are listed in the same paragraph in Parshas Ki Sisa (Shmos 34). This hints that the mitzva of bikkurim arouses Divine Mercy.

**Bonus Question?**

Answers on back page
The sons of strangers will build your city walls. (60:10)

As far as the Jewish People are concerned, they really didn’t need city walls at all. For no man would dare to wage war on them, and thus they did not need fortresses and strongholds.

However, the ‘sons of strangers’ — non-Jews who had accepted upon themselves the seven Noachide laws — they certainly needed the walls. For according to the Rambam, the law of the ger toshav (non-Jew who has accepted the seven Noachide laws) is only applicable during that time when the custom was to have city walls.

Therefore “the sons of strangers” built the city-walls so that they would have the status of gerim toshavim. For once they achieved this status, the Jewish People have a mitzva to provide for their sustenance and welfare.

A wall can be more than just a protection against enemies...

Due to the sin of the Golden Calf, the first-born of every family lost the right to perform the temple service, and thereby receive Trumah and Maaser. Thus, “I removed the holiness from my house, and I gave it to the Levi...” is a confession to the sin of the Golden Calf.

Sforno

In this, the last of the seven Haftoros of Consolation, the prophet Isaiah calls on Jerusalem to rise from the pain of darkness and shadow, and to shine to the world in her full glory. The light of redemption, both physical and spiritual, is being radiated on her. Her long-banished children are returning, and in their wake are the nations of the world who have acknowledged Hashem, and that the Jewish People are his emissaries. This redemption, unlike those that have preceded it, will be the final and complete one. “Never again will your sun set, nor your moon be withdrawn, for Hashem shall be unto you an eternal light, and ended will be your days of mourning.”

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