



Ask The Rabbi...

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This edition contains:

1. What is an "Ayin Hara"?
2. A Bracha Riddle

Sue Perstishous from Salem, Massachusetts asked:

Dear Rabbi,

After saying "Bli Ayin Hara" recently, I was wondering, "What is an Ayin Hara"?

Dear Sue,

The belief in *Ayin Hara* is not a superstition but is well founded on references from the earliest Jewish texts. Sarah "gives" Hagar an *Ayin Hara*, causing her to miscarry her first pregnancy. Yaakov warns his sons not to be seen together so as not to incur *Ayin Hara*. Another example is King Saul's jealousy of the future King David who is credited with greater military prowess and "gives" him an *Ayin Hara*.

The Talmud quotes Rabbi Yochanan as saying "I am a descendant of Yosef over whom *Ayin Hara* had no control." The Talmud also says that fish represent a form of life that is free of the influence of *Ayin Hara*. According to one opinion of the Talmud, a first-born daughter prevents *Ayin Hara* from affecting the family.

Ayin Hara also has Halachic ramifications. The Talmud states that it is forbidden to stand in a neighbor's field when the crops are fully grown. Rashi explains that this is forbidden because of *Ayin Hara*.

Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler in a letter to his father asked "Where is the justice in a system that causes people to suffer for the jealousies of others?" Rabbi Dessler answered that what happens is the following: One person who has what another person lacks is "careless" and lets the other person see what he has. This causes pain to the other person, and his cry goes up to the Heavenly court.

The lesson in all of this is that we must learn to be sensitive to others, and not flaunt what we have. Many people yearn to have what others have, and suffer real pain when they see others casually flaunt those things.

True, they shouldn't be jealous, but we cannot expect everyone to be a *Tzaddik*. Divine justice demands retribution for causing this pain to another person.

You mention that you say "*Bli Ayin Hara*" (literally "Without the Evil Eye"). In Yiddish it is rendered as "*Ken Ayin Hara*." We say this as a prayer to Hashem, so that if there are any silent cries going up to the Heavenly court, He will not listen to them, and He will protect us from any harm. There are other *Ayin Hara* "antidotes" such as tying red strings around one's wrist, and the "*Hamsa*" ("Five-Fingers"). Be careful not to use any remedy or prevention unless it is commonly used by Jews, since some practices are forms of witchcraft. The best protection is to behave modestly and with a genuine concern for the feelings of others.

Sources:

- Bereshit 16:5, Rashi.
- Bereshit 42:5, Rashi.
- Shmuel 1,18:9.
- Tractate Berachot - 20a.
- Tractate Bava Batra - 141a.
- Tractate Bava Batra - 2b.
- Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler - *Michtav M'Eliyahu* vol. 3, pp.313-314; vol. 4, pp.5-6.

This Week's Riddle

Raphael Adams poses the following riddle:

Which four *berachot* are said exactly once every year?

Hint: "*Al mikrah megilah*" is incorrect because it is said at night and in the morning. "*Al achilat matzah*" is said two nights in a row outside of Israel.

Look for answer next week.

Got a riddle for the Rabbi? If you have a Jewish riddle that you think would be appropriate for "Ask The Rabbi," we'd like to see it! We hope to share a few of them with our readers in future columns.

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 ohr@jer1.co.il. We can't include all questions submitted, but we do try to respond to everyone.

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