



# Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

## This Issue Contains:

1. De Vine Revelation
2. Sheviti
3. What The Dead Know
4. Sanhedrin of Seventy
5. That's What Western Walls Are Made Of
6. Yiddle Riddle
7. Public Domain



## DE VINE REVELATION

Derek Koss < djsports@westworld.com > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

When the flood was over, the first thing Noah did was get drunk. Why? And what was the lesson from that? Noah acted so strangely from his drinking that his behaviors became a moral question. What was G-d saying?

Ira < hisadis@hotmail.com > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

How did Noah know how to make alcohol? How did he get drunk?

Dear Derek Koss and Ira,

As for Noah knowing how to make wine, there's no reason to think that people didn't know how to make wine before the flood. Noah was 600 years old at the time of the flood, so he had plenty of time to learn what everyone else knew. Besides, grape juice ferments by itself when left to react with the oxygen in the air and it naturally becomes wine.

The Midrash relates that Noah took vine branches into the ark with him. He decided to begin the process of rebuilding the world by planting them. This was his first mistake, for he should have begun planting something more vital for mankind's existence — wheat, for example. One mistake leads to another: He made wine, had a drink, then another and another. Once drunk, he lost his dignity. The message is that the pleasures of the world are available for us, but we must exercise restraint and never lose sight of our role as a holy people.

Sources:

- Bereishis Rabba 36:4
- Midrash Aggada 9:21

## SHEVITI

Howard D Feiner, San Mateo, California  
< hdfainer@ix.netcom.com > wrote:

What is a "sheviti?" What do they say and are there any special things about them?

Dear Howard D Feiner,

A "sheviti" is a written page with the verse "I have placed G-d before me always" and sometimes also Psalm 67 written in the form of a menorah. The Hebrew word *sheviti* means "I have placed." The purpose of the *sheviti* is to arouse a person's awareness of the presence of God and to instill fear of heaven. Many synagogues have such posters on the wall, or in front of the cantor and some place small pages in their prayerbooks. Some authorities are against production of the small *shevitis* since it is very likely that they will be lost, or not treated with the proper respect due to something that contains the name of Hashem.

Sources:

- Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 1:1
- Ramah, Mishna Berurah ad loc. Paragraph 4

## WHAT THE DEAD KNOW

Chava < gordon1@mskcc.org > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

What do we believe about the knowledge people who have passed away have of events in this world? My father passed away almost two years ago. My sister just got engaged, baruch Hashem. Does my father have any knowledge of this? I thank you for your time.

Dear Chava,

Yes, the dead can sometimes have awareness of what goes on in this world. There's actually a custom to try to get engaged and married soon after the passing of a parent in order to bring joy to the deceased parent. So, it's possible that your father knows about your sister's engagement and that it's bringing him joy.

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@virtual.co.il](mailto:ohr@virtual.co.il). Or use our form at <http://www.ohr.org.il/ask/page/ask.htm>. We can't include all questions submitted, but we do try to respond to everyone.

Ask The Rabbi is written by Rabbi Moshe Lazerus, Rabbi Reuven Lauffer, Rabbi Reuven Subar, Rabbi Avrohom Lefkowitz, Rabbi Mordechai Becher and other Rabbis at Ohr Somayach Institutions / Tanenbaum College, Jerusalem, Israel.

General Editor: **Rabbi Moshe Newman**

Production Design: **Lev Seltzer**

Ask The Rabbi is available from several sources:

- World Wide Web: Our address is <http://www.ohr.org.il>
- Fax and Mail in Israel and US-MAIL in America. Send us a note requesting a subscription in Israel, or call 800-431-2272 in the US for details.
- E-Mail via InterNet. To subscribe, send the message "sub ask {your full name}" to [listproc@virtual.co.il](mailto:listproc@virtual.co.il)

22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103, Jerusalem Israel  
38 East 29th Street 8<sup>th</sup> floor, New York, NY 10016, USA  
613 Clark Avenue West, Thornhill, Ontario L4J 5V3, Canada

972-2-581-0315  
1-212-213-3100  
1-905-886-5730

972-2-581-2890  
1-212-213-8717  
1-905-886-6065

[ohr@virtual.co.il](mailto:ohr@virtual.co.il)  
[RZCorlin@aol.com](mailto:RZCorlin@aol.com) or [estern@aol.com](mailto:estern@aol.com)  
[Somayach@MSN.com](mailto:Somayach@MSN.com)

Sources:

- Tractate Berachos 18b

**SANHEDRIN OF SEVENTY**

Avraham Shimon Becher, age 11, < becher@netmedia.net.il > wrote:

*Dear Rabbi,  
The Anshei Knesset Hagedola had 120 judges. I think the Talmud says that you're not meant to have an even numbered beit din (rabbinical court) so as to avoid a tied vote. So how could the Anshei Knesset Hagedola have 120 judges?*

Dear Avraham Shimon Becher,

The *Anshei Knesset Hagedola* was not a *beit din* for the purpose of judging civil or criminal cases. The maximum *beit din* in that regard was 71 members, like the "*Beit Din Hagadol*" also known as the "*Sanhedrin Gedola*." This number is derived from the verse in the Torah where G-d tells Moshe to gather 70 elders; including Moshe himself there were 71.

Rather, the *Anshei Knesset Hagedola* was a body that issued Rabbinic enactments, compiled parts of the Bible and instituted the blessings and prayers.

Sources:

- Bamidbar 11:16
- Sanhedrin 2a, 3a & 40a
- Megillah 2a
- Bava Basra 15b
- Berachos 33a

---

**THAT'S WHAT WESTERN WALLS ARE MADE OF**

Wendy Davis < ddprodf@telalink.net > wrote:

*What is the Western Wall made of? Were the stones quarried in Israel. Thank you,*

Dear Wendy Davis,

The Western Wall is made of sandstone which is very common in the central Israel area. It was almost certainly quarried in Israel. First of all, the stone is very common here, and is still quarried and used in building today in Israel. Secondly, some of the stones are incredibly heavy, and would have been extremely difficult to transport. There is one stone that weighs approx. 250 tons!

## Yiddle Riddle

**Last week we wrote:** When one of the Chassidic Rebbes was eight years old he was asked a riddle: "What verse in the Torah has the first three words the same as the last three words?" He replied, "The verse where Moses did not say *emet* (the truth)." What did he mean?  
(Riddle courtesy of Baruch Sterman < baruch@netmedia.net.il >)

**Answer:** In the last verse in *Parshat Shlach*, Moses quotes G-d: "*Ani Hashem Elokaychem ... Ani Hashem Elokaychem*" — "I am the L-rd your G-d who took you out of the land of Egypt to be your G-d, I am the L-rd your G-d." After this verse during the recital of the *Shema*, we immediately add the word "*emet*" — "truth" — as though this word were part of the verse. This, however, is *not* the way the verse appears in the Torah. Therefore, this is the verse in which Moses did not say the word "*emet*," although when we read the verse, we do say "*emet*."

## THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

*Comments, quibbles, and reactions*

*concerning previous "Ask-the-Rabbi" features.*

*One more suggestion for someone whose name spelled backwards describes them: This was told to me by Malka Mantin. "Moshe" which spelled backwards is "Hashem," and Moshe is described as an "Eved Hashem" — "Servant of G-d."*

*Benyomin Wolf, Yeshiva U. < bwolf@ymail.yu.edu >*

*Some possible answers to the Yiddle Riddle:*

*Moshe — his name spelled backwards is "Hashem."  
Leah — she cried to "HaKel" (Hashem) so that she wouldn't have to marry Esav.*

*Mamaleh@aol.com*

*Re: Minyan Motivation: Another version of the story is that there once was a town with 10 Jewish men, and they always had a minyan — however, when the 11th man moved into town, they could never get a minyan — each one thought he could stay home because there would be exactly 10 without him.*

*Howard Kravitz, Chicago, IL < email@withheld >*