

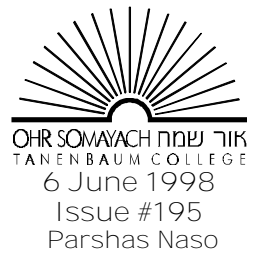


Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

This Issue Contains:

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WAITING TABLES

David Walles from Australia <wallesd@fast.net.au> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I have a question that recently had practical implications. We were sitting in a restaurant and some older people walked in as they had a booking. The restaurant management confused the booking and it turns out that there was no space for them to be seated. They were angry that we as the younger generation did not show "derech erez" by getting up for them and offering our table. We were surprised at this and my question is, is there an obligation to get up for older people in a commercial setting where we are paying customers like all other customers? What is the halacha and would there be a difference between a bus situation and a restaurant?

Dear David Walles,

First of all, let's not confuse "old" with "sick." The Torah teaches us to honor the elderly even if they are healthy, and to help sick people even if they are young. So, in order not to confuse these issues, let's assume we are talking about healthy 70 year olds who need no physical assistance. Assuming this, you were not obligated to give up your table. Depending on the situation, however, it may have been a good thing to do.

The Torah says, "Rise before an old person, and honor the presence of a sage." The *Shulchan Aruch* defines "old" as age 70. If a 70 year old person walks by, you must stand. This is not in order to offer

him your seat, but rather as a way of showing honor by recognizing his presence.

The obligation to show honor is not limited to standing up, but can also involve giving your seat, helping with a package, or otherwise offering assistance. However, one is not required to incur a financial loss as a result. Since there is a definite monetary value in having a seat in a restaurant, you were therefore not required to offer your seat. Although the same argument can be made for a bus seat, as you have paid for the right to sit there (again, assuming the older people are physically able to stand in relative comfort) nevertheless one should stand for an elderly person on a bus or subway.

That having been said, keep in mind that "derech erez kadma l'Torah" — good manners and character traits are a prerequisite to observing the Torah. Depending on the situation, simple etiquette and common sense may require you to stand. This is especially true if you wear a *yarmulke*, because people tend to generalize about others based on their dress — therefore, when you wear a *yarmulke* you are "Judaism's ambassador" and must therefore keep to a higher standard than the letter of the law requires.

In the case of a restaurant booking, I don't think this applies, as it is normal to be seated on a reservation or "first come first served" basis, and one is not expected to relinquish his seat for another. In a pizza shop, or other informal setting where people "eat and run," you should give up your seat.

Sources:

- Leviticus 19:32
- Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 244:1

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 info@ohr.org.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.

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MERCY ON MOSHE

H.J. Erner from Lake Worth, Florida <HJE67@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

If Moshe was unable to realize his dream of entering Israel because of one transgression (so-called) how are we who are nowhere near what he was to aspire to our dreams? I really do not believe that he should be held to a higher plane because of who he was.

Dear H. J. Erner,

You say Moshe was held to a higher standard. Higher than what? True, Moshe was held to a higher standard than others. However, Moshe wasn't held to a higher standard than Moshe. That is, the standard of conduct expected of Moshe was a standard of conduct befitting of him. That is something of which G-d is the perfect Judge.

The problem is: We are so far removed from the high level of righteousness achieved by Moshe that we can barely understand what it was that he did wrong. But to say that all people should be judged by the same yardstick is to deny the difference among people.

Furthermore, a leader must consider not only the propriety of an action, but also how others will perceive the action. People look to a Torah leader as an example, and therefore his actions have far reaching effects. The more influential the person, the more careful he has to be in this regard. Since Moshe missed an opportunity as the leader to bring the people to greater heights of spiritual awareness, he lost the privilege of being the leader.

There's another reason Moshe was denied entrance into the Promised Land. That is to enable dispersion when the people of Israel sin, because Moshe symbolizes eternity, as the Torah he passed on is eternal. If he would have brought the people of Israel into the promised land they would never have been exiled from it, and when they sinned they would have been destroyed, G-d forbid, instead of dispersed among the nations.

MYSTIC SIXTY

<Name@Withheld> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

What is the significance of the number 60? 1/60 appears in several things: "Bittel b'shishim" (halachic nullification of an item mixed with 60 times its volume of another item), a dream is 1/60 of death, a person visiting the sick takes away 1/60 of the illness, etc. Does the number 60 or 1/60 have any mystical significance?

Dear Name@Withheld,

The Talmud and Midrash state: "Fire is 1/60 of hell, honey is 1/60 of the manna, Shabbat is 1/60 of the World to Come, sleep is 1/60 of death, and dreams are 1/60 of prophecy. Dreams are the buds of prophecy."

Some commentaries say the above are all based on the rule that non-kosher food which gets mixed into a kosher food is annulled in a ration of 1/60, assuming that it is not sour, salty, bitter or spicy. This is related to the taste threshold of the average human (see Pfeiffer's Handbook of Physiology). Accordingly, something which is on the threshold of existence but not quite "there" is called "one sixtieth."

Maimonides states: "As you are aware, our Rabbis state that a dream is one sixtieth of prophecy; and you know, that it is inappropriate to make comparisons between two unrelated concepts or things...and they repeated this idea in Midrash *Beresheet Rabbah* and said, 'the buds of prophecy are dreams.' This is indeed a wonderful metaphor, for just as a bud is the actual fruit itself that has not yet developed fully, similarly, the power of the imagination at the time of sleep is exactly that which operates at the time of prophecy, in an incomplete and unperfected state."

There is a mystical idea behind one sixtieth (at least regarding dreams) which is based on the statement in the Zohar which states "There are six levels [each one encompassing ten sub-levels] between *netzach* (eternity) and *ratzon* (will)." Therefore dreams, which have their source in *ratzon*, because they are of the world of freewill, are one sixtieth of prophecy which is from the world of *netzach*.

Sources:

- Talmud Tractate Berachot 57b
- Midrash Rabbah Genesis 17:7
- Maimonides, Guide for the Perplexed 2:36
- Zohar Pekudei 254a

Yiddle Riddle

Two exactly identical people in the exact same place on the exact same day do the exact same act with the exact same intentions. However, the first one is fulfilling a *mitzvah d'oraita*, a Torah commandment, and the second one is transgressing an *issur d'oraita*, a Torah prohibition.

(Note: The people are exactly identical. The answer is *not*: "One's a *kohen* — or member of any special group — and one isn't," or "One's life is in danger and one's isn't." In other words, the riddle could equally be asked about the same person acting twice.)

Hint #1: The first person says a blessing before his action. Hint #2: The order of their actions is important.

Riddle submitted by Rabbi Yaakov Bradpiece

THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

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

Re: Intermarriage (Ohrnet Emor):

What a powerful essay you provided regarding reasons forbidding Jewish intermarriage! And I say that as a non-Jew who reflects the feelings and sense of amazement provided by Tolstoy and Mark Twain. Thank you for the great amount of courage you display in this secular world, which continues to denigrate the sacredness of being Jewish. The "modern" world will disparage you as being "elitist" and will try to destroy you spiritually and literally. But G-d will never permit that, if you stay true to His word. But you will have to hang tough, because you have the forces of the media, the entertainment industry, and agnosticism at all levels aligned against you. And against we non-Jews who support your views. We always look for that "light unto the gentiles" promised in G-d's word, and your email service helps provide that light. Thanks for standing up for the laws promulgated by the G-d of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Louis Alexander, Houston Texas
< louis@alexander.hd.co.harris.tx.us >

Re: Moshe's Name (Ohrnet Tetzaveh):

You explained why the Torah uses the name Moshe, and not the name his mother gave him. I have heard that the letters of Moshe — mem, shin, hey — refer to three objects that Moshe was unable to comprehend until Hashem showed them to him. They are: Mem: Menorah — Moshe was shown a Menorah on fire; Shin: Shekel — Moshe was shown the Shekel; Hey: Hachodesh — Moshe was shown the size of the moon in reference to the mitzvah of setting the calendar. Hope it's been interesting.

James Franks, King Solomon High School
< KSHS@ort.org >

Re: Red Thread (Ohrnet Bechukosai):

Here in Brazil (which was first settled by Jews evicted from Spain and Portugal during the Inquisition) a red thread is placed on an infant's forehead to stop hiccups! It is thought of exactly as protection against the evil eye (supposed cause of the hiccups)! Thank you for all the good work you do. I enjoy reading Ask the Rabbi.

Julia Michaels from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
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