



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

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OHR SOMAYACH תנוח טאנענבאום קאלעדזש
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Parshas Pinchas

IN-LAWS AND SHABBAT LAW

Name@Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I live in Netanya. I work 12 hours every day. My wife works. I visit my in-laws in Tel Aviv occasionally. The kids are small. Ages 4 & 8. They cannot be up late. The in-laws are old. They cannot be up late. We cannot stay there over the weekend. No room and no patience! I drive to Tel Aviv once a month on Saturday for my wife to see her parents and for my kids to see her side of the family. I see no other way. Saturday is the only day when it is possible to travel to Tel Aviv. I have no intention to live in Tel Aviv. I think I am acting morally and ethically. What can I do?

Dear Name@Withheld

You are a hard working man and I admire you for that. And I admire your intentions: You want to observe Shabbat and you also want to respect your wife's parents.

And your argument is very convincing: so convincing, in fact, that the Torah devotes an entire verse to refute it: The verse says "A person must respect his mother and his father and must observe My Sabbaths, I am the L-rd your G-d." (Leviticus 19:3). Our Sages explain the verse as follows: If your parent tells you to break the Sabbath, you must not listen. Why not? Because "I am the L-rd, your G-d" — i.e., your father has no right to command you to break G-d's commandments.

So even if your own parents demand that you visit them on Shabbat, you aren't allowed to violate Shabbat to do so. The same goes for your wife's parents.

Therefore, you must find another solution to your problem. Have you ever tried explaining your dilemma to your employers? Maybe they will give you one day off per month. Or perhaps half a day is enough. Why *not* consider moving? Maybe you will find a better job in Tel Aviv.

If you sincerely try to keep Shabbat without any excuses or rationalizations, I promise you that you will experience an extra measure of Divine assistance in your efforts to do so.

TWO TICKETS TO LOTTERYVILLE

Havah < havah@netvision.net.il > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Hi. In a recent "Ask the Rabbi" you wrote "G-d can do anything, but G-d doesn't 'like' doing miracles very often. G-d made natural laws and wants us to follow these laws." I was told that Orthodox Jews are not allowed to put more than one ticket in a box at a Chinese auction (popular Israeli fund-raiser) or to buy more than one lottery ticket per week because it shows a lack of faith in G-d. What I quoted above from "Ask the Rabbi" seems to indicate that this is not true. How do I know if Hashem wants to prove to me the laws of statistics work or if I should be proving my faith by only putting one ticket in the box? Thanks. PS I love this publication.

Dear Havah,

First of all, buying multiple tickets and winning the lottery doesn't prove the laws of statistics. Neither does buying one ticket and losing. Second of all, buying more than one lottery ticket does not show a lack of faith. However, it does seem a waste of money, unless the money goes to a good cause.

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Ask The Rabbi is written by Rabbi Moshe Lazerus, Rabbi Reuven Laufer, 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: **Eli Ballon**

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☎ 22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103, Jerusalem Israel

☎ 972-2-581-0315

fax: 972-2-581-2890

☒ info@ohr.org.il

☎ 38 East 29th Street 8th floor, New York, NY 10016, USA

☎ 1-212-213-3100

fax: 1-212-213-8717

☒ RZCorlin@aol.com or estern@Aol.com

☎ 613 Clark Avenue West, Thornhill, Ontario L4J 5V3, Canada

☎ 1-905-886-5730

fax: 1-905-886-6065

☒ Somayach@MSN.com

MASADA AND SUICIDE

Marisa Yentel from Cordoba, Argentina

< myentel@yahoo.com > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Hello, My name is Marisa Yentel, I am from Cordoba Argentina. My question is: If the Torah orders us to choose life, and this is against suicide, I wanted to know what is the Torah's point of view in relation to what happened at Masada. I wanted to know also sources on the matter. Thanks.

Dear Marisa Yentel,

It's interesting to note that the Mishna and Gemara, both written after the events of Masada, make no mention of it. I believe the reason for this is that no one really knew what went on at Masada. All we have is the account of Josephus in "The Jewish Wars," much of which is probably from his imagination.

If the Jews on Masada committed suicide only for the sake of evading capture or ignominy, then it would be forbidden. If however they were worried that they would be tortured and thereby forced to worship idols or participate in immorality, they would be justified in committing suicide. Since no one knows what their motivation was, we can neither approve nor condemn their action, and hence the Talmud's silence on this issue.

Sources:

- Sanhedrin 74a

CHARITY BLESSING

Barnet Shapiro from Cape Town, South Africa
< shapiro@iafrica.com > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Why do we not say a beracha [blessing] when giving tzedakka [charity]?

Dear Barnet Shapiro,

Your question is dealt with by the early commentators. One answer given is as follows: One

does not make a *beracha* on an action which is dependent on another person's acceptance, as there is a chance that the other person might not accept and hence the *beracha* would in vain.

Sources:

- Teshuvot Rashba Vol. 1 ch. 18, 254 and Vol. 3 ch. 283 and affiliated to Ramban 189
- Ketuboth 40a

GOLIATH'S SKULL

Michael Vincen Obar from Sisters, Oregon
< mic_o@juno.com > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I heard rumors of Goliath's skull being found in the wailing wall and would like to know if the rumors are rumors or if they're true. If it's true, can you also give me details?

Dear Michael Vincen Obar,

Actually it is impossible that Goliath's skull or anything would be buried in the vicinity of the Western Wall for two reasons:

- 1) No one was ever buried in the Old City of Jerusalem.
- 2) The Temple had to be pure, and any dead body (or parts thereof) would be a source of ritual defilement.

In the Book of Samuel I, 17:54-55 it states that David brought the head to Jerusalem to show Saul, but it does not state anything about the burial site. The sword of Goliath was actually placed in the Temple later as a reminder of the miracle (Radak, ad loc.)

Yiddle Riddle

Please fill in the missing 5 numbers in the following sequence:

15, 16, 115, 116, 215, 216, __, __, __, __, __, __, 315, 316.

Riddle Submitted by Lev Seltzer < levella@csi.com >

Answer next week...

THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

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

Re: Si, Si, Signor (Ohrnet Bamidbar):

There's no prohibition against naming a son after a living father. Wouldn't there be a halachic problem in that children are not supposed to use their parents' names in their parents' presence? The siblings of such a child would violate this when using their brother's name in their parents' presence.

Basya Meyer <batya@ligatureltd.com>

Ohrnet responds:

You are correct that this is a consideration. One solution would be for the father to forgo his honor in this regard.

Re: Ohel and Fuller (Ohrnet Beha'aloscha):

Thank you for the lovely Ohrnet on Parshas Beha'aloscha that I picked up at the minyan of Bnei Yeshivot in Telz-Stone. Some comments: Ahal is not ohel: It occurs in the plural (ahalos or ahalim) with a chataf-patach under the alef and a kamatz under the heh, indicating that the singular should have a kamatz under each (like *davar/d'varim*), and so should be written ahal, and not confused with ohel, a tent.

In Parshas Balak, I note that according to the above, a ba'al korei who reads "k-ohalim nitayu" instead of "k-ahalim (or k-aholim) nitayu" will change the meaning and his congregation will not have fulfilled the requirement of the reading of the Torah.

Ahal is probably Aloe, the "aloe vera" that is now a popular ingredient in shampoos, including some sold here in Israel.

On another note, although you are right that a follar is mentioned in Yerushalmi Pe'ah as a (very small) coin current in the time of the Talmud, the "fuller" of which Ms. Block heard were probably those people called "fullers" in English, people whose job was making used woolen garments look more like new (more "full") — people who would today be called dry cleaners. The term "fuller" is often used in translations and English commentaries for these people (see Isaiah 7:3). For that matter, the Mr. Fuller who started the brush company probably got his name because an ancestor had been a fuller.

David M. Schaps <dschaps@mail.biu.ac.il>

*Kollel Chachmei Lublin of B'nei B'rak Department of
Classical Studies Bar Ilan University*

Ramat Gan, Israel

Ohrnet Lights Up the Internet

I think it's great that you have this web site so that both observant and non-observant people with the Internet can have something worthwhile to read. Also I think that your regular feature, "The Other Side of the Story" gives a person a different lookout on life; for example, not judging as quickly as we may want to.

J. Krakauer <bh.J.Krakauer@MCI2000.com>

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☎ 22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103, Jerusalem Israel

☎ 972-2-581-0315

☎ 972-2-581-2890

☎ info@ohr.org.il

☎ 38 East 29th Street 8th floor, New York, NY 10016, USA

☎ 1-212-213-3100

☎ 1-212-213-8717

☎ RZCorlin@aol.com or estern@aol.com

☎ 613 Clark Avenue West Thornhill Ontario L4L 5V3 Canada

☎ 1-905-886-5730

☎ 1-905-886-6065

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