

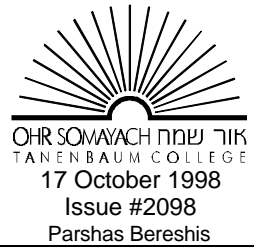


Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

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TONIGHT IS ANOTHER DAY!

Evan Libeskind < CrazyMan49@aol.com > wrote:

*Dear Rabbi,
Why do all Jewish Holidays start at
sundown?*

Dear Evan Libeskind,

In the Jewish calendar, the day begins with the evening. This is true not only for the holidays, but for any calendar date. For example, a baby born in the evening has a different birth-date than a baby born before sundown. Why is this so?

In describing the order of Creation, the Torah says "There was darkness on the face of the deep; and G-d said 'Let there be light' and there was light."

Clearly, the darkness existed before the light. Similarly, the description of each day ends with the phrase "and it was evening, and it was morning..." Again, the evening precedes the morning. Thus, the Jewish day begins in the evening.

This symbolizes classic Jewish optimism: If it's dark in the beginning, don't despair! It will end in great light!

IN THE WAKE OF THE SNAKE

Shlomo < shlom1@mofet.macam98.ac.il > wrote:

*Dear Rabbi,
How come G-d punished all the generations for the
sins of Adam and Eve? The Torah says if the children
do not continue with the sins of their fathers they
will not be punished for those sins. Did their
children continue the sins of Adam and Eve?*

Dear Shlomo,

A good question. To answer that "the children are punished because they continue to sin" might be true generally speaking, but it's not sufficient in light of the Talmudic statement listing four people who never sinned, yet died nevertheless "from the bite of the snake." That is, they died

from the curse that followed Eve's encounter with the snake. So why were those four people punished?

There are different approaches to answer this question. One is that Adam's sin changed the whole of creation, creating a new reality.

Therefore, we were furnished with a new type of life, new parameters and new tools to deal with this new reality, to complete our task in the new creation. The curses, such as toil, pain of childbirth and death, are all part of the plan now, somehow necessary to give us the opportunity to accomplish our purpose. Those who died sinless, therefore, weren't being "punished." Rather, they were simply born into a new reality in which these negative factors are a necessary part.

Another approach is found in the Kabbalah. The Kabbalistic works say that Adam's soul was a very "large" soul, a mosaic of all future souls. These souls were then dispersed after his death among all his descendants. In this sense, every soul participated in the sin and so has to atone.

Sources:

- Shabbat 55b
- Shelah Shavuot 213

FINICK-KID

Email@Withheld wrote:

*Dear Rabbi,
I like to be shomer Shabbos (Sabbath observant) but
my son will not eat anything that I have made for
Shabbos. He is nearly four years old. I have been
cooking for him on Shabbos as otherwise he would
not eat and I feel bad for breaking Shabbos like this.
Can you please advise me what I should do.*

Dear Email@Withheld,

Aren't children wonderful? Firstly and most importantly, you should not compromise on your mitzvah observance. As a parent myself, I understand the importance of listening to one's children and trying to accommodate them. However, this should not be at the expense of breaking Shabbat.

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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It sounds like your son doesn't like the traditional Shabbat foods. So find food your son likes and give it to him. Doesn't he like "French fries?" How about macaroni and cheese? Pizza? These can be cooked before Shabbat and kept warm. They can even be rewarmed on Shabbat under certain conditions (for the permitted method, write back or consult your local orthodox rabbi). These aren't traditional "Shabbat" foods, but it doesn't matter. The main thing is that he eat and that you observe Shabbat.

Your situation brings to mind a story told about the famous Talmudic giant, Rabbi Yosef Rozen, known as the Ragotchover. There was once a woman whose newborn baby would not nurse on Shabbat. This was endangering the baby's life, as once a week, from Friday afternoon before sunset until Saturday night after dark, the newborn refused to eat. He was losing precious weight at a time when he needed to be gaining. All the doctors were stumped. Finally, the mother brought the baby to the Ragotchover for a blessing. Instead, the Ragotchover told the mother that on Shabbat she should not change into her special Shabbat clothing; rather, she should remain in her regular weekday clothing. That Friday night the mother did as told: Instead of Shabbat clothing, she wore her weekday garb, and the problem was solved! The baby nursed!

To explain how he solved this mystery, the Ragotchover cited the Tosefot commentary to the Talmud. The Talmud (Bava Kama 37a) says that an ox which establishes a pattern to gore on Shabbat is considered "wild" only regarding Shabbat, but that during the week it retains its "tame" status. Tosefot gives the reason: The different clothing people wear on Shabbat causes the ox to fail to recognize them. From this, explained the Ragotchover, we see that low-level intelligences recognize differences in clothing and can exhibit changing behavioral patterns based on this recognition. The newborn didn't nurse

because he didn't recognize his mother when she wore her Shabbat clothing.

JINGLE BELLS

Henry Soussan from Brighton, England <ahsoussan@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Why are the bells on the Torah crown not muktzeh (forbidden to handle) on Shabbat?

Dear Henry Soussan,

I've never met you, but your question rings a bell. The Shulchan Aruch forbids sounding any type of musical instrument on Shabbat. Why, then, do some synagogues use Torah scrolls which are decorated with crowns that have bells attached? These bells clang against the crown when the Torah is taken from the Holy Ark. Shouldn't this be forbidden on Shabbat?

Actually, some authorities did forbid using these ornamental bells on Shabbat. The common custom, however, is to permit them. Why?

The answer is that the bells are not intended to ring musically; rather they are intended to alert the congregation to the fact that the Torah is being removed from the ark. The people can then stand in honor of the Torah and ready themselves for the Torah reading. So, since this is done in order to honor the Torah, plus the fact that there is no "musical" intention, it is permitted.

Sources:

- Aruch Hashulchan 338:3
- Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 338:1, Mishna Berura 6
- Mishna Berura 339:8
- See also Rema 339:3

Yiddle Riddle

Shmuel Bendel <sybendel@hotmail.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I have a riddle for you. What is the shortest word in the Torah?

Answer next week....

THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

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

Re: Paying for Praying (Ohrnet Nitzavim):

Regarding paying synagogue dues, you wrote: "When a person pays for something, he comes to value it more than had he received it for free."

I get the "Ask the Rabbi" column for free over e-mail, and I think that I value it quite a lot. In my opinion, the best things in life are free, because they are given selflessly. As Pirkei Avot teaches us: "Love which is dependent on something, when that thing is gone, the love is gone."

*Ari Trachtenberg, University of Illinois at
Urbana/Champaign <trachten@uiuc.edu>*

Re: Conversion (Ohrnet Ki Seitzei):

You wrote: "We believe that when a non-Jew keeps the seven Noachide laws, he merits a portion in the World-to-Come, and therefore there is no imperative for him to become Jewish. If, like the Christians and Moslems, we believed that those of other religions are condemned to damnation, then we also would desire to convert people. However, we believe that a person can be completely righteous and merit the World-to-Come without conversion, by adhering to the basic moral laws revealed to Noach. Therefore we feel no compulsion to convert others, unless they show a desire to convert."

With this statement, you have earned my complete and everlasting respect.

*Tom Gorham, Chicago, Illinois
<gorham@famvid.com>*

My uncle, zatzal, told me a story about Harav Yehezkel Abramski, zatzal. Harav Abramski arrived in England to head the bet din (Jewish court) just after a non-Jew decided to sue the bet din for not accepting him as a convert. The non-Jew wanted to marry a Jewish girl, and when asked by the bet din whether he would observe Shabbat, he said that he would behave just like his Jewish father-in-law to be: He would go to synagogue Saturday morning and then go to a football match in the afternoon. The judge asked Rav Abramski why the non-Jew should not be accepted as a convert. Rav Abramski's reply was that we are "Am Yisrael," our laws are the laws of a nation, our Torah is both the Divine law of a religion and the requirements we have from every member of the nation. He asked the Judge "Do you have law-breakers in England?" "Yes." "If I had put on my immigration form that I am a law-breaker, would you have let me in the country?" "Of course not!" "For us Jews, Shabbat desecration is against the laws of our Torah and our nation. True, we have Shabbat desecraters amongst us; but when someone like that comes to the bet din and asks to join our nation, we tell him we do not need any more." The judge accepted the argument and ruled in favor of the bet din.

*Gershon Kandler Rehvot, Israel
<gershon_kandler@yahoo.com>*

Re: Curling Payot (Ki Savo):

It is common among the Bobover Chassidim to use curlers, mainly for young children, so that when they grow up, they will have beautiful curly payos (sidelocks). Other Chassidim drench their payos in water in which sugar has been dissolved (an older custom than the curlers...) effectively making their own version of hair spray.

Arie Folger <afolger@ymail.yu.edu>

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