



Ask The Rabbi...

Researched at Ohr Somayach Institutions / Tanenbaum College
22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103, 91180 Jerusalem, Israel
tel:972-2-810315 • fax:972-2-812890 • Internet:ohr@jer1.co.il



25 March 1995
Issue #61

This issue is dedicated in memory of R' Kaddish ben R' Moshe Aharon by his son, Jeremy Rose, of London

This edition contains:

1. Punishment w/o Crime?
2. Acronyms
3. The Double Triangle

Jeannine Berman wrote:

In Ki Sisa I read that Hashem remembers good deeds for thousands of generations. However, the bad deeds of the current generation (mother and father) are carried onward for three or four generations. This infliction on those who are yet unborn or on those who are not directly responsible for the bad deeds does not feel right to me. Maybe you could provide some positive thoughts. Thank you and best regards.

Dear Jeannine Berman,

My first positive thought: "Its [the Torah's] ways are ways of pleasantness and all Its paths are peace" (Proverbs 3:17).

Let's look at the verse you quoted:

"[Hashem] recalls the iniquity of parents upon children and grandchildren, to the third and fourth generations."

Does this mean that Hashem punishes the children for the sins of their parents?

According to the classical commentaries, the emphasis of the verse is not that the the children are punished for their parents' sins. In fact, this verse describes the "13 Attributes of *Mercy*" used by Hashem in ruling the Creation.

The verse can be explained as follows:

The wicked person deserves to be destroyed right away. Instead, Hashem gives him an extension, to allow him to repent, or to bear righteous offspring. If, however, after four generations the offspring remain wicked, Hashem is "faced with a choice." He can grant another reprieve to this generation, just as he did for their ancestors. Or, he can punish/destroy them as they deserve. At this point, Hashem decides to go with the latter option. Why? Because He "recalls the sins of the fathers." This means that He remembers that these offspring themselves are *already* the result of a merciful extension, and they have already benefited from several generations of patience.

But what He really wants is that each person who strayed from the pleasant ways of the Torah will return to Him, and receive reward.

Sources:

- Sforno, Ramban - Exodus 34:7.
- Tractate Berachot - 7a.

Balint Nogradi (Grinnell College, Iowa) wrote:

I noticed that often after the name of a great Rabbi, the word "Shlita" is written. What does this mean? Thank you.

Dear Balint,

The term "Shlita" is actually an acronym, and stands for the words "Sheyichye L'orech Yamim Tovim Aruchim." This means that we pray that he "will live many long and good days." As a **word**, "Shlita" means that the Rabbi is a person of "leadership."

Another term often written as a Bracha when addressing someone is "Amosh" which is spelled: Ayin, Mem, Vav, Shin. This stands for "Ad Me'ah V'esrim Shana." That is to say: "May You Live To Be 120!"

Of course, Judaism doesn't have a monopoly on acronyms. The military is also a big fan of them. Two U.S. army officers once passed a new recruit who was on cleaning duty. "Don't forget to clean off the B.R.T." said one of them, pointing to a big round metal object.

"Boy, how do you know all the names of all the different machinery?" marveled a fellow officer. "And what does B.R.T. stand for, anyway?"

"Big Round Thing," he answered.

In response to last week's column about the origin and meaning of the Magen David, Gershon Seif <76132.3170@compuserve.com> wrote:

I recall learning that the two triangles represent the reciprocal relationship that the Jewish people have with Hashem in bringing blessing to the world. The triangle pointing up stands for our Mitzvot. They go up to Heaven, then they activate a flow of good to the world from Heaven back down to the world, which the triangle pointing down stands for.

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Ask The Rabbi is written by **Rabbi Benzion Bamberger, Rabbi Reuven Subar** and various other Rabbis at Ohr Somayach Institutions / Tanenbaum College, Jerusalem, Israel.

General Editor: **Rabbi Moshe Newman**

Production Design: **Lev Seltzer**

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