



# Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

## This Issue Contains:

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Dr. Don Weissman <weissman@netvision.net.il> wrote:

*Recently in your weekly Torah publication you mentioned that Yaakov studied in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever. What was being studied in this 'yeshiva' since the Torah was not yet given to B'nei Yisrael? What are the sources that in fact there were schools for 'Jewish' studies. I think there is need for answers to these and many many other 'rational intellectual' questions.*

Dear Dr. Don Weissman,

Wisdom and righteousness didn't begin at Sinai. One need look no farther than the *Chumash* to see that Mankind had *mitzvot* and Divine wisdom before the giving of the Torah:

Example: Hashem directed Noah to take into the ark seven of every kosher-type animal and two of every non-kosher animal (Genesis 7:2). From this it's clear that Noah understood the idea of 'Kosher' 700 years *before* the giving of the Torah.

After the flood, Noah and his offspring were commanded not to eat a limb from a live animal (Genesis 9:4). This plus the six *mitzvot* given to Adam make up the seven 'Noachide Laws,' including prohibitions against stealing, killing, idol worship, etc.

Today the Talmud contains no less than three tractates — Bava Kama, Metziah and Batra — dealing almost exclusively with property laws. Isn't it logical that people in ancient times — in upholding the prohibition against stealing — would need a similar code of property laws? Just as today Yeshivot exist where we study the wisdom received at Sinai, it's quite rational that academies always existed for the study of the seven Noachide laws and the prophetic wisdom of the time.

Therefore, Noah's son Shem and Shem's grandson Ever directed an academy in Be'er Sheva where these traditions were studied and upheld in the hope that they be passed on to future generations.

Ever hear of Hamurabi? 'The Code of Hamurabi' (18th century B.C.E.) is one of the oldest known legal codes on record. I heard from Rabbi Simcha Wasserman, *zatzal*, that Hamurabi was most likely a dropout from the academy of Shem and Ever.

Sources:

- *Bereishit Rabbah* 26.
- See Genesis 26:5 that Abraham fulfilled the *mitzvot*

I. Frankel <itchie@ibm.net> wrote:

*Our Shul faces east, whereas Jerusalem is southeast from our city. Almost everyone faces east but for one or two people who face south-east. Is it more important to face a bit more in the right direction, or not to be different from (and maybe disrespectful to) the vast majority of the worshippers?*

Dear I. Frankel:

During prayer one should face towards Israel; in Israel towards Jerusalem, and in Jerusalem towards the Holy of Holies on the Temple Mount.

However, if the entire congregation is facing the wrong direction — although they're 'out of line' — one shouldn't differ from them but rather should face the same way they do. So in your case where the synagogue and the congregation face east, one should stand with his body facing east along with the rest of the congregation. However, he should tilt his face southeast towards Jerusalem.

Likewise someone praying at the Western Wall today should turn his face somewhat to the left so that he will be facing the place of the Holy of Holies.

And don't forget to point your heart in the right direction.

Sources:

- *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 94:1,2
- *Mishnah Berurah* 10

## Yiddle Riddle:

Last week we asked: There is a day in the Jewish Calendar when some years we say *Hallel* and other years we say *Tachanun*. Which day is it?

Answer: **The third of Tevet.** Some years Kislev has 29 days and other years it has 30. When Kislev has 29, the third of Tevet is the last day of Chanukah on which we say Hallel, but when Kislev has 30 days, the third of Tevet is the day after Chanukah, and we say 'Tachanun.'

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