



# Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

## This Issue Contains:

1. Varying Vowels
2. Lacto-Carno Pisces



OHR SOMAYACH תנו"ך טאנענבאום קאלעדזש  
TANENBAUM COLLEGE  
12 October 1996  
Issue #121

Case E. Krell <102147.2634@CompuServe.COM> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Can you answer a question for me? Some friends and I were sitting around yesterday discussing...well, something, and I mentioned — I don't remember why — there were no vowels written down in the Torah. Yet, I was at a loss to explain why. This is something I probably knew at one time, but have forgotten.

So, how come there's no vowels written down in Torah?

Dear Case. E. Krell,

Your question has two answers: A simple one and a Kabbalistic one.

The simple reason the Torah has no vowels is that the Hebrew alphabet **doesn't have any**. The vowel sounds are sometimes written as dots under the letters. But they aren't necessary. Just as you can read tricky English words like 'psychic' and 'queue' without looking in a dictionary, Hebrew speakers can read Hebrew without the dots.

Hence, the entire Torah, Prophets, and Writings, the Mishna and Talmud, and all the classic commentaries were written without any vowels. Even today, Israelis read menus, soup cans, and street signs with no vowels. That's just how Hebrew is.

But there is another answer to your question:

The Hebrew language is Holy, and the Hebrew alphabet is Holy. Even the shapes of the letters contain many lessons and mysteries. So too, the **absence** of the vowels has much to teach us. For example:

The letters of a word are like its 'body.' The vowels are like its 'soul.' Just as the soul is the life of the body, yet it is invisible, so the vowels remain unwritten and invisible, yet they breathe 'life' and meaning into every word.

The Torah is not just a book, but an interactive medium. The absence of vowels beckons us to become partners with the Torah, to breathe life into its letters. In return, the Torah breathes life into us, as it says, "It is a Tree of Life to those who uphold it."

Just as one hammer blow shatters a rock into many fragments, so every word in the Torah has many meanings and secrets. Some of the hidden meanings of the Torah are derived by reading the words using various vowel combinations. For example, the words 'In the beginning' can be read to mean that G-d created a single 'stone' — the focal point from which the universe expanded.

According to *Kabbalah*, the primeval Torah which preceded the creation of the world was written 'black fire upon white fire.' It had no spaces between the words. Rather, it was a long string of letters. This Torah was composed entirely of various 'names' of Hashem. (One of these names has 72 letters.) This was the Torah given to Moses on Mount Sinai, along with the explanation of how to break the letters into the words we have today.

Sources:

- Tractate Succah 49a, see Jerusalem, Eye of the Universe, Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, chapter 8
- Ramban's Introduction to Chumash

<Noodnick9@aol.com> wrote:

I've had gefilte fish at orthodox homes, where the fish plate and silverware was removed before the meat was served. Why must the meat and fish be separated?

Joseph Matetiayu Karp wrote:

Could you please explain the prohibition of eating fish and cheese together. I would like to know where this law/custom is derived from as I have been told that it is a Chassidic custom. Also, if it is a Chassidic custom and, seeing as though I'm not Chassidic, even if I have been observing this custom for many years under the impression that it was mandatory, do I still have to continue with it?

Dear <Noodnick9@aol.com> and Joseph Matetiayu Karp,

The Talmud prohibits eating fish and meat together, as it can be unhealthy.

As far as eating fish and cheese, the majority of halachic authorities rule that it's permitted. Therefore, you needn't continue observing this custom.

However, it's preferable that you 'annul' your acceptance of this custom. This is done by appearing before a 'beit din' of three observant Jews and saying, "I practiced this custom because I mistakenly thought it was the halacha. I wish to be exempt from this practice." They respond, three times. "mutar lecha..." — "It is permitted for you..."

Teacher: Bobby, use the word 'officiate' in a sentence.

Bobby: A man got sick from officiate.

Sources:

- Tractate Pesachim 76b
  - Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah chapter 116
  - Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 214:1
- Shemirat Haguf v'hanefesh I:1,2

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Issue #121 - 12 October 1996 - Bereishis