



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

This Issue Contains:

1. Two Brothers
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Eliezer Shemtov <shemtov@chasque.apc.org>

I am curious about the story about two brothers, one was married and the other, single. At harvest time, each one took some bags of grain secretly to the other's field. The married one felt sorry for the single one and the single one felt that the married one, who had many children, needed more. One night, as they were sneaking over to each other's field, they bumped into each other, realized what the other one was doing, and embraced. Hashem said that He wants that place where such love was expressed to be the site of the Holy Temple. I've heard and read the story many times in contemporary Jewish books. The other day somebody asked me what the source was and I was stumped.

Shmeina-K <Iserebry@hornet.liunet.edu> wrote:

We have been trying for years to find a Jewish source for the story of the two brothers who bump into each other on Mount Moriah during the night when they are trying to bring grain to each other.

Dear Eliezer Shemtov and Shmeina-K,

The story isn't found in the Talmud, and apparently not in any of the well-know Midrashic sources either.

That doesn't necessarily mean it's false, however. In fact, I think I found a hint for this story in the Torah itself!

The most sacred place in the Holy Temple contained the Ark of the Covenant. On top of the Ark stood two golden figurines. These figurines, called *Cherubim*, were winged, human-like figures that faced each other.

The hint to the story about the two brothers is simply this: To describe their facing position, the Torah says the *Cherubim* should face as "a man to his brother!"

Source:

- Shemot 25:20

Peter Fine <finefarm@iafrica.com> wrote:

There is a custom for parents to bless their children on Friday night. We bless our daughters to be like the Matriarchs — Sarah, Rivka, Rachel and Leah. And I was wondering why we bless our sons to be like Ephraim and Menashe — the sons of Joseph? Why don't we bless them to be like the Patriarchs — Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?

Dear Peter Fine,

A fine question! We bless our sons to be like Ephraim and Menashe in fulfillment of the words of Jacob in Vayechi, when he prophesies that the Jewish People will always bless their children in that manner. Jacob chose Ephraim and Menashe to be our role models because they were the first two children to be born in exile; nevertheless, they retained their Jewish identity and even grew to great spiritual heights. In addition, Ephraim and Menashe were elevated to the status of "tribes" by Jacob. This implies that they reached the level of their fathers and thus forged an unbreakable link in the chain of Jewish continuity.

Sources:

- Genesis 48:20
- Oznam LeTorah, ad loc.

Yiddle Riddle

Last week we asked:

What is the relationship between the button on a man's trousers' back-pocket being on the left side, according to American standards, and one of the 613 commandments of the Torah?

Answer: Most men have more 'padding' in back on the left side than they have on the right (perhaps due to the right side being generally more muscular). The button on the left pocket encourages people to put their wallets there. Since the left has more padding, the wallet causes less pinching of the sciatic nerve — otherwise known as the *Gid HaNashe* — than were it to be placed on the right.

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Ask The Rabbi is written by Rabbi Moshe Lazerus, Rabbi Reuven Subar, Rabbi Avrohom Lefkowitz and other Rabbis at Ohr Somayach Institutions / Tanenbaum College, Jerusalem, Israel.

General Editor: **Rabbi Moshe Newman**
Production Design: **Lev Seltzer**

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22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103, Jerusalem Israel
38 East 29th Street 8th floor, New York, NY 10016, USA
613 Clark Avenue West, Thornhill, Ontario L4J 5V3, Canada

972-2-581-0315
1-212-213-3100
1-905-886-5730

fax: 972-2-581-2890
fax: 1-212-213-8717
fax: 1-905-886-6065

ohr@virtual.co.il
RZCorlin@aol.com or estern@Aol.com
Somayach@MSN.com

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