



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

This Issue Contains:

1. Count Your Blessings
2. Divided We Stand
3. Answer to Yiddle Riddle



Mel Etra <meletra@earthlink.net> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

What is the origin of the halacha (custom?) that one must recite at least 100 blessings during the course of each day? Thank you

Dear Mel Etra,

In the time of King David 100 people were dying every day due to a terrible plague. The Sages at that time perceived the plague's spiritual essence and instituted 100 blessings a day. The plague stopped.

Even after the plague, the 100 blessing requirement still applies. Many halachic works make an accounting of exactly 100 blessings which are said in the course of every normal weekday.

On Shabbat (and festivals) the accounting is different. This is because the silent *amidah* prayer on Shabbat has fewer blessings than the weekday *amidah* prayer. So on Shabbat you need to make up for the 'missing' blessings. You can do so by eating different types of foods, smelling various spices, and saying the appropriate blessing for each one. Or, according to some authorities, you can fill in the missing blessings by listening to the blessings made during the Torah reading and saying 'amen.'

There's a story told about the Brisker Rav, Rabbi Yitzchak Ze'ev Soloveichik, who was once a guest at someone's home in Switzerland. On Shabbat afternoon he asked his host for a banana and an apple, but he didn't eat them. The afternoon prayer, the third meal, and *havdalah* came and went and still the fruit remained uneaten. After *Melava Malka*, the mystical meal served at the conclusion of Shabbat, the host could contain himself no longer. Mustering up his courage, he asked his august guest why he hadn't eaten the fruit.

The Brisker Rav answered that at first he had needed the fruit because he was missing two blessings from the required hundred. (An apple requires the blessing for 'fruits of the tree' and a banana requires the blessing for 'fruits of the earth'.) However, during the afternoon synagogue service he was called up to the Torah where he recited two blessings: One before the Torah reading and one after.

Sources:

- Tractate Menachot 43b
- Aruch Hashulchan Orach Chaim 46

David Salvadori from Italy <nuoto77@protec.it> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Please, why can men and women not stay near each other in the synagogue? Somebody told me that it is because women can disturb men during the prayer with their voices. Is this the answer or there are other matters? Where is written in the Torah such rule?

Shalom

Dear David Salvadori,

The law requiring a *mechitzah*, division, between men and women in the synagogue dates back to Biblical times and is mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud. There are a number of reasons given for this:

- So as not to cause those who are unmarried to feel left out. We come to synagogue to relate to G-d as Jews, not as spouses, husbands, wives, fathers or mothers. With a *mechitzah*, spouses do not sit together. That way, we are more of a congregation than groups of individuals.
- To prevent there being a light, social atmosphere during prayer. The atmosphere during prayer should be serious. One way to help achieve the proper atmosphere is by creating a division between men and women.
- To promote modesty, and to prevent the distraction from prayer to both men and women from the presence of members of the opposite gender, to whom there is a natural attraction.

Sources

- Tractate Succah 51b, 52a

Yiddle Riddle:

Last week we asked: The name of which Parsha has the same *gematria* — numerical value — as the number of its verses?

Answer: *Parshat Tzav*, which has 96 verses. (This is according to some opinions. However, according to the punctuation in a standard *Chumash*, *Tzav* contains 97 verses.)

(Riddle posed by Josh Spindell)

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