



# Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

## This Issue Contains:

1. On the Tip of Your Tongue
2. Answer to Yiddle Riddle



Aviva Jackson <John@leebaron.demon.co.uk> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

My family went to my grandparents' house for lunch on Shabbat, and at the table I gave a d'var Torah on the portion of the week. I quoted a couple of verses off by heart, but afterwards my dad mentioned that he thought he heard somewhere that one is not supposed to quote from the Torah by heart. I am quite embarrassed about this, in case it is true and I've done the wrong thing in front of Saba [grandfather] and all his guests. Can you tell me if this is true or not, please? Thanks very much.

Dear Aviva Jackson,

In a sense, your dad is right, but there's no reason for you to be embarrassed. Here's why:

The Talmud states: "You are not allowed to say Torah verses by heart." However, we find many exceptions to this rule. For example, the Talmud relates that on Yom Kippur the *Kohen Gadol* used to say the public Torah reading by heart. Other *kohanim* also had certain verses to say during the Temple service, which they often said by heart. And it's a universal custom that we close our eyes when saying the verse, "*Shema Yisrael...*"

Obviously, this rule applies only under certain conditions. The commentators offer different explanations for when it applies:

According to many authorities, the prohibition applies only when you are helping other people fulfill a halachic obligation. For example, the public Torah reading cannot be said by heart, because there is an obligation for the listeners to hear the Torah.

According to the Shulchan Aruch, the prohibition doesn't apply to a verse which is well known. So, for example, you can say by heart any verse from the daily prayers.

Other authorities maintain that there is no actual *prohibition* against saying verses by heart. Rather, it's *preferable* and it's a *mitzvah* to be strict and read the verses from a book.

One of the great pillars of halacha, Maimonides, does not even mention the prohibition of reciting verses by heart, indicating that he permits it completely. Some explain this as follows: Just as the Sages in the time of Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi lifted the ban against writing down the Oral Torah, so too, they allowed reciting the Written Torah by heart. Both steps were to safeguard the Torah and protect it from oblivion.

Ideally, you should look up the verses. But if that's difficult or a strain on your audience, you can be lenient in light of all the various opinions and leniencies, as is the general custom.

It's not always easy to memorize text. Little Johnny was having difficulty memorizing Lincoln's 'Gettysburg Address.' His teacher scolded him, "How can it be so difficult? Why, Abraham Lincoln wrote the entire thing while riding to Gettysburg on the back of an envelope." "Wow," Johnny said, "How did such a tall man fit onto the back of an envelope?"

Sources:

- Talmud Gittin 60b
- Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 49
- Ibid., Mishna Berura 9
- Aruch Hashulchan 49

## Yiddle Riddle

Last week we asked:

How can you have a mixture which is dairy, and when meat accidentally falls in, the mixture becomes *parve* (neither meat nor dairy)?

Answer: Milk or meat which falls into a food is considered 'nullified' if the food contains 60 times the amount of the milk or meat. But if the food contains only 59 times the amount of milk or meat, then the milk or meat is not nullified.

Therefore, if a mixture contains a ratio of 59 parts of *parve* food and one part milk, it is dairy. If one part of meat then falls in, the meat becomes nullified because the other food is 60 times greater than it. At this point, the milk also becomes nullified because now there are also 60 units of food more than it (59 *parve* plus one of meat). Thus the entire mixture becomes *parve*.

Source

- Yoreh De'ah 98:9

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