



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

This Issue Contains:

1. Jewish Mourning
2. Cain's Mark
3. Well, I'll be a Nazirite!
4. Answer to Yiddle Riddle



Tom Toale < ttoale@aol.com > Langhorne, Pennsylvania wrote:

The brother of two of my co-workers died yesterday. The funeral is at 1:30 Sunday. Is it appropriate for me (a Christian) to attend? Also, I'd like to send a basket of fruits and nuts. The sister (who we've worked with the longest) is married, while the brother still lives with the parents (whom I've never met). Can I send the basket to the sister? Where do I get such a basket? (they live in northern New Jersey). Also, is it appropriate for her Christian co-workers to visit during shiva?

Dear Tom Toale,

I think that it would be very appropriate for you to attend the funeral. Any gesture that shows you care for the mourners will help them through this traumatic time.

The same is true regarding the shiva — the seven day mourning period. However, it's generally accepted that only family and close friends visit during the first three days.

Many people bring food to the mourners, because mourners don't engage in activities, such as cooking, which detract from their sense of mourning. Obviously, the food should be kosher. I suggest you look in the Yellow Pages for the closest store that can put together a kosher basket of fruits and nuts.

Yaacov < jsolomon@intouch.bc.ca > from Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Is there any reference — Talmudic or otherwise — that tells us what the mark was that Hashem placed upon Cain to protect him (Genesis 4:15)?

Dear Yaakov,

Here are a number of opinions from Midrashic sources:

- Cain became a leper so people would avoid him.
- G-d gave him a dog to guard him.
- A horn grew out of his forehead for protection.
- G-d engraved a letter of His Name on Cain's forehead. This would remind people that G-d commanded not to kill him.

Sources:

- Bereishet Rabbah 22:28, Tifferet Tziyon
- Midrash Aggadah 4:15

Bob Lee < TorahLover@aol.com > from Jacksonville, Florida wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Can a man or woman take a Nazirite vow in these days? There is no Temple, but that hasn't stopped the Hebrew people from being Hebrew. So is there a way to take the vow of the Nazirite for a short period of time, or, because there is no Temple, could a man or woman take the vow and then keep it until the Temple is rebuilt? And may there be a Temple soon! Your opinions would be a blessing! Thanks!

Dear Bob Lee,

If a person vows to become a Nazirite, he or she would indeed be obligated in all the commandments pertaining to a Nazirite. For example, a Nazirite may not drink wine or eat any grape products, cut his hair, or come in contact with a dead body.

The Nazirite vow terminates by bringing offerings to the Temple. Since today there is no Temple, a Nazirite would remain a Nazirite forever. Rabbi Dovid Cohen, *zatzal* (father of the current Chief Rabbi of Haifa) took a Nazirite vow, and hence remained one his whole life. He was exceptional in this regard, and became known as the 'The Nazir.'

However, Rabbi Cohen was a renowned *tzaddik* — a very righteous person — in all areas of Jewish conduct, and he was a great Torah scholar. A person shouldn't even consider becoming a Nazirite unless he is of similar ilk. Taking a Nazirite vow smacks of haughtiness. Furthermore, it's virtually impossible to avoid all the transgressions involved. I've never heard of anybody in this generation becoming a Nazirite.

Yiddle Riddle

Last week we asked:

Once upon a time, a young man came to a rabbi and asked, "Rabbi, please tell me while I stand on one foot: What is the foundation upon which the entire Torah is based?"

The Rabbi answered "Whistle till the fish comes backwards." What did he mean?

Answer:

'Whistle' in Hebrew is "*Tishrok*." It is spelled "*tav shin reish koof*." These are the last letters of the Hebrew alphabet, backwards. "The fish comes" in Hebrew is "*hadag ba*," spelled "*hey dalet gimmel bet aleph*." These are the first letters of the Hebrew alphabet, backwards. Hence, 'Whistle' till 'the fish comes,' backwards, refers to the entire Hebrew alphabet, which is the foundation of the entire Torah.

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