



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

This Issue Contains:

1. Guardian Angels
2. Chair Persons
3. Blessed Art
4. Answer to Yiddle Riddle



Adam Auton from London < ai06@dial.pipex.com > wrote:

*Dear Rabbi,
What does Judaism say about guardian angels?*

Jane Hewitt < swimmer@twave.net > wrote:

*Dear Rabbi,
Could you please give me a literal definition of the word angel as it was written & meant in ancient Hebrew? Does it mean the same thing in Hebrew as it does in English? It seems that the Old Testament angels were like us in appearance. Could you give me a Jewish definition of angel? Thank you very much for any help.*

Dear Adam Auton and Jane Hewitt,

The Hebrew word for "angel" is "*malach*." The word "*malach*" is related to the word "*melacha*," which means "task." Hence, a *malach* is an agent or vehicle which accomplishes a task. The English word "angel" comes from the Greek word "angelos" meaning "messenger" or "agent."

Therefore, a "*malach*" can be a wind, a person, or a purely spiritual force. The angels such as those who spoke to Abraham and Jacob were purely spiritual forces which *appeared* in human form.

Our Sages state that when you perform a commandment you create an angel that accompanies you. Maimonides explains that this refers to the spiritual and intellectual concepts that influence the person as a result of performing the commandments.

According to Maimonides, the degree of Divine Providence you experience is directly proportional to your attachment to God, and therefore the commandments which create that attachment are the true "guardian angels" of a person.

Sources:

- Tehillim 104, Commentary by Rabbi Avraham Chaim Feuer
- Zohar, Raiya Mehemna Parashat Shelach & Tractate Avodah Zarah 17a
- Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Mezuzah, 6:13
- Maimonides, Guide for the Perplexed, Section 3

Rachel from New York City < rfeiner@jmct.com > wrote:

*Dear Rabbi,
Is their any 'real' reason that we lift the bride and groom up on chairs at their wedding or is it just something we do for fun? A friend asked me and I thought it was for fun, but wanted to make sure. Thanks!*

Dear Rachel,

You're right, it is fun! However, I think — as in most lighthearted things that we do — there's an element of seriousness to it. A bride and groom are like a king and queen. Just as a king and queen are transported everywhere, likewise we lift up the bride and

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

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

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Nitzavim/Vayelech

Brenda Kaldenbach < kalden@xs4all.nl > from Holland wrote:

Why are we commanded to make our ritual objects beautiful? I am a Jewish graphic designer and illustrator, and I am specialized in making ketubot [marriage contract document]. I help thus to make ritual objects beautiful. I know that one is supposed to make ritual objects beautiful, but I want to understand why. I know that it is a part of Jewish tradition, to make a nice table for Shabbat, for example, but also when I pass this on to my children I want to explain to them why it is done.

Dear Brenda Kaldenbach,

Someone who fulfills a commandment has done what Hashem demands of him. However, because of our great desire to go beyond that which is demanded of us the possibility exists to enhance each mitzvah by beautifying it beyond the letter of the Law. Therefore, the Torah tells us that we should perform the commandments in a beautiful manner.

Here's an analogy. Let's say a wife tells her husband she wants a gold necklace for her birthday. The husband is faced with many possibilities: Did she mean a nine karat gold necklace that costs \$18? Or a twenty-two karat, diamond-encrusted necklace for \$18,000? Or something in between?

The answer is: If the husband just wants to "do his duty" he only needs to buy the \$18 necklace. If, however, he wants to show his wife how dear she is to him, and how much he loves her, he will buy the most beautiful necklace he can afford.

Yiddle Riddle

Last week we asked: "We all know that you must nullify chametz prior to Pesach at a time when it is still permissible to derive benefit from it, because when the chametz becomes totally prohibited, the Torah withdraws a person's ownership of it. At that stage, a person no longer has the power to nullify it. Under what circumstances would a person be able to make an effective statement of nullification **during** Pesach, which will enable him to avoid transgressing the strict prohibition on owning chametz?"


Answer: The person has some "Kosher for Passover" flour which became mixed with water during Pesach. **Before** the mixture becomes chametz, he can nullify it in order to avoid transgressing the prohibition of owning chametz.

Sources:

- Orach Chaim 444:8

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