



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

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OHR SOMAYACH אוהר שומאך
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Parashat Chayei Sarah

David < haneve@hotmail.com > wrote:

I'm 37 with no real Jewish education. Sometimes I feel overwhelmed with the idea of studying Torah, yet at this time of life I have a real hunger for it. I haven't started a family yet — I don't want them to inherit the spiritual void that I did. Any ideas?

Dear David,

A friend of mine from Yeshiva, when his wife was expecting their first, broke the news to me by saying: "I've got eight years now to study Bava Metzia!" (Bava Metzia is traditionally the first tractate boys begin when they start studying Talmud at age eight.) We all feel a bit lacking when it comes to our children's Torah education.

I support your desire to start studying. It is basically the only real cure for for assimilation and intermarriage in the Jewish community at large, and in our own future generations in particular. There's no time like now to begin.

The best thing is if you can give a block of time — it doesn't have to be too long — but enough so that you can make a real foundation which you can build upon. A year of study would be great, but even a few weeks would make a big difference.

Where do you live? Exactly how much Jewish education do you have? Where you are with respect to job or career? Any info you give can help me suggest where you should study and for how long. If you can't take out a block of time, I might be able to help you arrange a study partner or Torah classes where you are.

I don't think you have to worry about your children "inheriting a spiritual void." Regardless of your own level of actual knowledge, you can raise your children in a solid Jewish community and send them to a good Jewish school. Then, all they need to inherit from you is your "hunger" for spirituality! (By the way, who did you inherit *your* spiritual

hunger from? Could it be that your parents deserve a little credit?)

Rachel Fyman < DaleFyman@easyinternet.net > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

What did Yishai do that gave him the merit to be mentioned always as the father of David, as opposed to, for example, Amram who is rarely mentioned as the father of Moses? Thanks.

Dear Rachel Fyman,

Often the *Tanach* refers to David as "David son of Yishai" whereas the Torah never refers to Moses as "Moses son of Amram." I think the reason is that David's lineage is of paramount importance. Since David is the founder of the monarchy and the messianic dynasty, the Torah emphasizes that he is a descendant of Yishai who was from the royal tribe of Judah.

Moses, on the other hand, founded the "Torah Dynasty." Through diligence and determination, anyone in the world regardless of lineage can become a Torah scholar. Therefore the Torah de-emphasizes Moses's lineage.

Interestingly, the Torah always refers to Elazar and Ithamar as "the sons of Aharon." Here too, their lineage is emphasized because they owe their positions to their father, Aharon, who was the High Priest.

Eric Posnack < eposna@sapient.com > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I always enjoy reading your email and have been passing it on to some of my friends. I think it's great that you are taking advantage of the Internet to reach out to so many people. Here's my question: One thing has always bothered me in services. It's the touching of the Torah with the prayer-book and kissing the prayer-book afterwards. This strikes me as a form of idolatry. It

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appears to be worshipping the Torah as an idol and we're instructed by the Torah not to do that. How is this act not idolatry? Thanks again for your many emails, and I look forward to your response.

Dear Eric Posnack,

A kiss is a way of expressing love and affection, not only a means of worship. When a father kisses his child it does not mean he worships him. We love the Torah, as it is our way of maintaining closeness to Hashem, Therefore we express our love in the earthly manner we are used to, such as kissing, in order to encourage our feeling of love towards Hashem and the Torah.

Rabbi Mordechai J. Gold from Indianapolis, Indiana < mjgold1@juno.com > wrote:

I am a Mashgiach in a mid-western city. I am involved with very secular Jews. I would like to have guests for Shabbat, but the problem is that there is the definite chance that there will be chillul Shabbos [desecration of Shabbat] like driving their car to my home! Am I allowed to have them over to my home for the Shabbat meal?

Dear Rabbi Gold,

As you know, it's forbidden to cause a fellow Jew to transgress the Torah. This is true regardless of that person's level of observance or affiliation. But what if your intention is to show the other person the beauty of Torah observance?

Your question was asked to a renowned halachic authority in Jerusalem. He said that if you have a proven talent for reaching out to non-observant people then you can invite them for Shabbat, but the invitation must include the option to stay within walking distance for the entire Shabbat. Even if you're sure they'll chose to drive, you've done your part by sincerely offering to accommodate them.

Yiddle Riddle

Last week we asked:

How is water from the sea
like atonement like a cow?
(Say these clues in Hebrew
And then you'll know just how!)

How's an onion in the shade
like three that he kneaded?
(These clues, too, are much clearer,
When in Hebrew they're repeated.)

Answer: In Hebrew, these are all **homographs** — that is, they are pairs of words that are spelled the same but pronounced differently.

Water / From the sea = **Mayim / Miyam**
Atonement / Like a cow = **Kapara / K'para**
An onion / In the shade = **Batzal / Batzel**
Three / That he kneaded = **Shalosh / Shelash**

In Hebrew, these pairs of words are all spelled exactly the same!

(Riddle thanks to *Kol Simcha*
Friday Morning English Radio)

THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

*Comments, quibbles, and reactions
concerning previous "Ask-the-Rabbi" features.*

This is a problem I've faced more than once! Is something "parev" or "REALLY parev" (i.e., not cooked in a fleishig or milchig pot). I think that the response should have made clear that the potatoes cooked in a fleishig pot can't be eaten at the same time as something milchig (or vice versa). It's implied from the second sentence in your answer, but not really clear to someone who didn't know about the issue. Kol Tuv.

Jeremy Rose, Albans, UK < jeremy@comsys.co.uk >

Please correct me if I'm wrong, but when you wrote "If you eat food that is parve — neither milk nor meat — which was cooked using clean "meat" utensils, you don't need to wait six hours before eating milk foods." Shouldn't it be made clear that although this is permitted, they may NOT be eaten together (in the same meal) with dairy foods?

*Rachi & Devorah Messing, Baltimore, MD
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The Rabbi replies:

Food cooked in a clean milchig or fleishig pot that had not been used for 24 hours may be eaten together with either milk or meat. (Initially, one shouldn't cook food in such a pot intending to eat it with the opposite kind of food.) If, on the other hand, the food was cooked in a pot that had been used within 24 hours for milk or meat, the Beit Yosef permits eating the food together with the opposite kind of food whereas the Remah forbids this. The Sephardic custom generally follows the Beit Yosef while the Ashkenazic custom generally follows the Remah.

Some other suggestions to answer your riddle about the people in the Torah whose names spelled backwards describe them.

Pufah / Ha'of — Puah cooed to the babies and took care of them like birds and B'nei Yisroel are compared to birds.

Lavan / Naval — Lavan was a low person, a "naval."

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