



# Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

## This Issue Contains:

1. Judge Knot
2. Too Far Side
3. Private Nurse
4. Butter Fat
4. Cremation
5. Yiddle Riddle
6. Public Domain



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Behaaloscha (outside Israel)

## JUDGE KNOT

Jill Schlessinger <jill\_s@socrates.berkeley.edu> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Is there anything in the Torah (or in other Jewish writings) that addresses the issue of interpreting someone else's feelings? For example: Something bad happens to someone and they are upset about it, and someone else tells them they are "over-reacting" and "irrational." What do Jewish writings say about making judgments about the legitimacy of other people's feelings?

Dear Jill Schlessinger,

In "Ethics of the Fathers," Hillel states "Don't judge another until you reach his place;" meaning, until you have been in the exact same position. Therefore, you can almost never judge another's feelings.

Even if one feels sure that the other person is over-reacting, he should carefully consider if, how and when to express it. As Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar says, "Don't try to appease your friend at the moment of his anger, and don't try to comfort him when his dead lies before him." Trying to cheer someone up at the wrong time, or to tell him he's over-reacting, can cause even more pain.

There are, however, "inappropriate" emotions. For example, the Talmud forbids "crying too much" — i.e., for too long a time — at the loss of a loved one. Eventually a person must get over his losses and move forward.

Rabbi Yisrael Salanter is reputed to have said: "When a child's toy breaks, he feels as bad as an adult would feel if his factory were destroyed." In short, people experience losses at different levels, so it's nearly impossible to judge others' feelings.

Sources:

- Pirkei Avot 2:5, 4:23
- Mo'ed Katan 27b

## TOO FAR SIDE

Yisroel Rupp <yisroelrupp@hotmail.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Are comic strips and cartoons depicting G-d as a human (such as The Far Side) against Rambam's Third Principle of Faith?

Dear Yisroel Rupp,

Yes, indeed they are. The third of Rambam's "principles of faith" is that G-d is not physical, nor affected by physical phenomena and that there is there is no comparison to G-d whatsoever.

## PRIVATE NURSE

Name@Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I am a nursing mommy. Sometimes, my baby will cut short the interval between feedings. Some ladies' rooms tend to be a little too dirty for me to sit on the floor and I end up having to duck into the back seat of the car. I feel like I am breaking modesty laws by feeding my baby in the back seat of the car. Could you explain modesty laws and how they relate to nursing in public? Thank you.

Dear Name@Withheld,

If your baby "cuts short the interval between feedings," the solution is simple: Give your baby a Swiss watch and a copy of his feeding schedule, and teach him how to tell time.

Seriously, though, babies don't work their feeding habits around their mother's "modesty schedules." It is perfectly permissible to feed your baby in a public place if necessary, but you should do so in a way of maximal modesty; e.g., drape a blanket or cloth over your shoulder.

If you have E-Mail and a question, you can submit it to Ask The Rabbi for possible inclusion in a future edition. Just write your question using your E-Mail program, set the subject to "Ask The Rabbi" and send it to [info@ohr.org.il](mailto:info@ohr.org.il). Or use our form at <http://www.ohr.org.il/ask/page/ask.htm>. We can't include all questions submitted, but we do try to respond to everyone.

Ask The Rabbi is written by Rabbi Moshe Lazerus, Rabbi Reuven Lauffer, Rabbi Reuven Subar, Rabbi Avrohom Lefkowitz,

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## BUTTER FAT

Hazel Moeller from Nelspruit, South Africa  
<hazel@mweb.co.za> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

The Bible says that one should not eat animal fat (Leviticus 7:23). I would like to know in which category does butter fall — an animal fat? Do orthodox Jews use butter, and on which scriptures do they base their choice? Thank you for this service!

Dear Hazel Moeller,

Yes, Torah Jews use butter; and no, butter is not an animal fat, in the sense of the verse you refer to.

Actually, your question is based on a misunderstanding of the word "*chelev*." The Torah forbids eating "*chelev*." *Chelev* refers only to specific fats found in certain places on the animal's body, such as the fat on the stomach, kidneys and liver. Thus, the vast majority the animal's fat is permitted. So, even if butter were considered an "animal fat," it would still be permitted, as are most animal fats. In reality, though, butter is considered milk.

For Biblical indication that butter is *permitted*, Deuteronomy (32:13,14) says: "[G-d] nurtured them [the Jews]...with butter from cows and milk from sheep." Would G-d give us food that wasn't kosher?

Sources:

- Leviticus 7:23-25
- Leviticus 3:3,4

## CREMATION

Name@Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I am a *ba'alas teshuva* (newly observant). My parents are close to 90 years old, and my mother has directed that her body be cremated. I have tried to bring up this issue with no success. Do you have any advice for me? Perhaps you know of an article I can send them which may be easier than me speaking to them about it. Thank you.

Dear Name@Withheld,

I suggest "The Bridge of Life" by Rabbi Y. M. Tuchichinsky.

In the right time and place, you might respectfully point out to your parents that according to Jewish law, one should not "sit *shiva*" (observe Jewish mourning rites) for someone who was cremated voluntarily, nor is one obliged to bury their ashes. You will not be able to properly mourn for her, and no *kaddish* will be said for her. This may have an impact. In addition, the body of a voluntarily cremated person is not liable for resurrection; this is not so much because of the physical impediment, but rather in line with the concept that one who doesn't believe in resurrection will not experience it.

Cremation declares that this world is the beginning and end of Man. A basis of Jewish faith is that this is not true. The body is held on deposit, and together with the soul, it really belongs to G-d. G-d decides when and where a person should die, and what should be done with the body once it has fulfilled its "this-worldly" purpose.

## Yiddle Riddle

Last week we asked:

My friend told me the following Yiddle Riddle: Rabbi Yehuda Hachassid writes in his famous will that nowadays a person should not have a *mechuten* (someone whose son married his daughter or *visa versa*) with the same name as he. What three people in the *Chumash* had a *mechuten* who had the same name as they?

Answer:

- Adam (See Rashi to *Bereishet* 4:1 that Cain married his twin sister, thus Adam's son Cain married Adam's daughter which made Adam his own *mechuten*).
- Yaakov Avinu (See Rashi to *Bereishet* 46:10 that Shimon married his sister Dina).
- Lemech (See *Bereishet* 4 that Lemech had a daughter Na'amah, who according to the Midrash in *Bereishet* 23:3 was the wife of Noach, whose father was also named Lemech).

# THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

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

Re: The Mitzvah System ("Ask the Rabbi" Bamidbar):

Thanks for the wisdom of your article entitled "*The Mitzvah System*." I'm a school teacher and I can use that piece of wisdom when my students ask the sort of questions that the answers would only serve to confuse them at a point in their studies where a full explanation would be of no benefit. Even for me! Thank you. Sincerely,

*Phil Ryder <PRyder1043@aol.com>*

Re: Agnostoramous ("Ask the Rabbi" Acharei - Kedoshim):

The following anecdote may serve as an interesting sidelight on your astute answer to the person who asked about his atheist friend:

A young man approached Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor of Kovno and said, "Rabbi, I am an atheist." Rabbi Spektor answered, "Really, my son? How long did you study in yeshiva? Have you studied the Talmud?" The young man replied, "I did not attend a yeshiva. I never studied the Talmud." To this Rabbi Spektor replied with a smile, "My son, you are not an atheist, you are merely an ignoramus."

*Raphael N. Levi <rnlevi@earthlink.net>*

Re: Candle Waving (Ask the Rabbi, Ki Tisa):

Regarding waving the hands three times when lighting the Shabbat candles: I remember my grandmother from Kovno making three circles over the candles before she covered her eyes and *davened* (prayed). She told me she did this to gather the light.

She passed away when I was only 12, but I remember she pronounced out loud a bracha to the effect of "*Baruch ha-Shemay*" three times as she made the circles. As I've gotten older I would like to honor her memory and say this bracha correctly. Any help from you or your readers is appreciated. Shalom and long life to you. PS. I'm curious if any other women remember their grandmothers saying anything before the silent prayer.

*Helen Block, San Francisco <HBlock@FM.UCSF.EDU>*

I actually heard of someone who remembers her grandmother saying "*bo-ee kallah* — come Bride" three times while waving the hands before saying the blessing.

*Name@Witheld from Jerusalem*

Re: Ask the Rabbi:

Just a note to say that this feature is fantastic.

*Yosef Pudell, Teaneck, NJ <Gmachine9@aol.com>*

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