



# Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem



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### USING STEP-FATHER'S NAME

Name&Email@Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

May a Bar Mitzvah be called to the Torah as the son of his step-father's Hebrew name or must he be called as the son of his real father's name? The boy considers his step-father his father and has no contact with his real father.

Dear Name&Email@Withheld,

The commandment "honor your father and your mother" refers to the person's biological parents. A person must certainly show the utmost honor to his step-parent, but this in no way exempts him from the Divine decree to honor his biological father.

I spoke with Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch, *shlita*, regarding your question. He cited a responsa of the Yaavitz that if there is absolutely no contact between the child and his father, then it is permissible to call the child to the Torah using his step-father's name. However, said Rabbi Sternbuch, if there is even the most minimal amount of contact between the father and his son, then the son should use his biological father's name.

### A LILY BY ANY OTHER NAME

Seth <Sethyn69@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I have always thought that the Hebrew word "shoshana" means rose but recently a teacher of mine told me it means lily. Which is the correct meaning?

Dear Seth,

Most commentaries define the shoshana as the lily. However some associate it with the rose (vered). Still others say that shoshana is a general name for flowers. In the Midrash, we find that the word shoshana comes from

the word "shesh" meaning six, as a shoshana is said to have six petals. Some say the six petals are the outer ones, but that in reality a shoshana has 13 petals. It is said to be red or white and have a pleasant fragrance.

Sources:

- Rashi Shir Hashirim 2:3, Ibn Ezra ibid 1:17, Metzudot ibid. 2:3, Vayikra Rabbah 23:3,6
- Bereshet Rabbah 221:1
- Zohar Pinchas 233b
- Pesikta Rabbati 10
- Zohar, Preface 1:1

### THREE CHEERS FOR EARS

Aryeh Levy from Mount Laurel, NJ <lslevy@erols.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

After reading the autobiography of Helen Keller and appreciating even more Hashem's gift of sight and hearing, I know there is a blessing for sight ("po-ke'ach ivrim"), but is there one for hearing? If so, what is it? If not, why not?

Dear Aryeh Levy,

There is a blessing for hearing: "Asher natan lasechvi vina — Who gave the rooster the ability to discern between day and night." According to the Talmud, this is to be recited upon hearing a rooster crow. Although it does not refer to hearing in itself, however, since it is a blessing on hearing a rooster crow, there is no need to institute another blessing on hearing alone.

Source:

- Talmud Tractate Brachot 60b
- See Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 46:8

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### WHO IS G-D?

Corinna < corinna@research.att.com > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
Who is G-d?

Dear Corinna,

G-d is the Creator of all that there is, and its ruler. In the same way that a king rules a nation, so too G-d rules the creation.

There is very little that we know about G-d Himself. We know that He is complete in every sense, not lacking anything, including being all powerful. We know that He is pure good. And we know that He is a simple unity; in other words, not only is He One and not two, so too He is One and not made up of parts. This is something that is impossible for us to understand.

What we do know more about is the way which G-d interacts with the creation — the character traits, so-to-speak, with which He makes His presence felt here in the world.

### WHO WROTE THE ZOHAR?

Joe McKay from Coatesville, PA < cgmckay@navdiv.com > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

*I am trying to find who is the author of the Zohar. I am studying the Kaballah and the teacher says that Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai is the author, but the Zohar was lost, and later found in the 13th century by Moses de Leon. Another school of thought is that it was written by Rabbi Moses de Leon. What is your opinion?*

Dear Joe McKay,

Universal Jewish tradition maintains that the Zohar was in fact authored by Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his students around 170-200 CE. Rabbi Moses de Leon merely published the already existent work.

### LOVING THAT SHABBAT

Robert Fairhurst from Fruitvale, BC, Canada < drillsgt@kootenay.net > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

*Do you have any ideas on how to get the children to love the Sabbath? Such as activities that are in accordance with proper Sabbath observance.*

Dear Robert Fairhurst,

Love of Shabbat can be instilled in children (and adults) through a gradual process of experiencing and appreciating the physical and the spiritual beauty of Shabbat. I think the most important point is that the children must have a role model who really enjoys Shabbat. Seeing you enjoying

Shabbat will serve as a magnet for their own enjoyment of Shabbat.

You can do many things to enhance the special quality of the day and foster a feeling of togetherness: Leisurely meals, singing Shabbat songs, and discussing the weekly Torah portion are excellent, as are going on family walks or playing games. Telling stories with Jewish content is a proven method of sparking children's interest and instilling love and appreciation of Shabbat.

### Robert Fairhurst responds:

*Thank you for your reply to my question. I thought your answer was a good one. I would like to know where I could get a copy of the Torah readings. I would also like to know what kind of traditions you follow with your family in keeping the Shabbat? Thank you so much for taking the time to answer my questions. PS Do you know of any Shabbat-keeping groups in my part of the world that I could visit?*

Dear Robert Fairhurst,

The Stone Chumash published by Artscroll is probably the best copy of the Torah readings for you. It has a modern translation and wonderful commentaries. It's available in Jewish bookstores.

Regarding customs, one custom I practice is blessing our children Friday night before the meal. I place both hands on each child's head and say "May Hashem make you like Ephraim and Menashe" for the boys and "May Hashem make you like Sara, Rivka, Rachel, and Leah" for the girls. We bless our sons to be like Ephraim and Menashe because they were the first two children to be born in exile; nevertheless, they retained their Jewish identity, grew to great spiritual heights, and even reached the stature of the previous generation; thus forging an unbreakable link in the chain of Jewish continuity.

The customs for Shabbat are many and diverse, so I'm sending you a list of some books about Shabbat.

- The Sabbath, Dayan Grunfeld (Feldheim)
- Sabbath: Day of Eternity, Aryeh Kaplan (NCSY),
- Menuchah VeSimchah, Mordechai Katz (Feldheim, JEP)
- Book of Our Heritage, Eliyahu Kitov, (Feldheim)
- Shemirath Shabbath, Yehoshua Neuwirth, (Feldheim)
- Zemiroth: Sabbath Songs, (Artscroll)

For Shabbat groups in your part of the world, I suggest contacting Rabbi Avraham Feigelstock (604) - 275-0007 or Rabbi Mordechai Feurstien (604) - 731-7184. Shabbat Shalom to you and your family.

# Yiddle Riddle

Which weekly Torah portion don't we read this year? Answer next week...

## THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

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

Re: The Meaning of the Name "Aharon" (Ohrnet Devarim):

*Todah rabah* for your answer to my question about the literal meaning of the name Aharon. It was very helpful, and I certainly would not have been able to find out the information myself. I will pass it on to a friend who named her child Aaron without knowing the meaning. She just liked the sound, but now she will be more aware of the Jewish meaning of her child's name.

Ronald Schnur <Rschnur@aol.com>

obviously more likely to assume that they were named after living relatives.

Second, I heard from Rabbi Shimon Hirsch of Monsey concerning an interesting German Jewish custom about naming. The famous Rabbi Shimshon Rafael Hirsch (Rabbi Shimon Hirsch's great grandfather) according to any title page of his works was really Rabbi Shimshon son of Rafael Hirsch. The custom in his time was that after the death of the father, the son would add and use the departed father's name to his own as a sign of respect.

Dovid Charlop <charlop@netvision.net.il>

Re: Naming after Living Relatives (Ohrnet Bamidbar):

Regarding whether the custom is to name children after living relatives, I would like to add two comments: I heard from Rabbi Rokowsky, Rosh Yeshiva of Ohr Somayach, Monsey NY, a strong indication that people were named after living relatives. On page 18b of Gemara Berachos, the story is told how Shmuel, the Amora, wanted to speak to his already deceased father. Shmuel asked the angels in charge to speak to his father whose name was Abba, and was informed that there were many people named Abba and he would have to be more specific. He then told them his father's name was Abba the son of Abba. Again he was told that there were also many people named Abba the son of Abba, and he would have to be more specific. In the end he was able to contact through giving additional information. Rabbi Rokowsky commented that if sons were named only after departed relatives, it is highly unlikely to assume that many fathers named Abba died and that the son born to them posthumously was named Abba. It is

Re: Yiddle Riddle (Ohrnet Balak):

Regarding your recent Yiddle Riddle "which verse in the Torah begins and ends with the same word," you answered Bamidbar 32:1. My son Yosef Chaim, age 12, found another answer: "V'yihyu to'amim milmata... li'shnei hamiktzaot yihyu — They shall be next to each other below ... for the two corners they shall be. (Shmot 26:24)."

Rabbi Dovid Speyer, Neve Yaakov, Jerusalem

Regarding Rabbi Bonchek's riddle: Which verse begins and ends with the same word? His answer was Bamidbar 32:1. Someone pointed out to me that a few verses earlier there is a similar example. The verse Bamidbar 31:39 begins with the word v'nefesh and ends with the word nofesh. Surely that qualifies as an alternative answer!

Ravi Shahar <ravis@writemail.com>

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