



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

This Issue Contains:

1. Calvin Klein vs. Label Klein
2. Keeping Kosher in Kosherland
3. Who is a Goof?
4. Yiddle Riddle
5. Public Domain



Dan Kerchner from Silver Spring, Maryland
<kerchner@washingt.jhuapl.edu> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
I recently bought a new coat. I took off the price tags but I left on the label on the outside of the sleeve that said the name of the designer. The other day I was in a Jewish book store, and the woman working there told me that halachically one should take all of the labels off a garment before you wear it. Can you explain what she was talking about?

Dear Dan Kerchner,

Carrying an item in a halachic "public domain" is prohibited on Shabbat. Of course, you're allowed to wear clothes outside on Shabbat because you don't "carry" your clothes, you "wear" them.

But what's considered "clothing?" Something that's normally removed, like a price tag, is not considered part of your clothing. So it's forbidden to "wear" a price tag outside on Shabbat, because you're not really wearing it, you're carrying it.

Regarding manufacturer labels, it depends. If it's a tag which people remove (for example, a "Cheapo's Bargain Basement" label) then it's like a price tag and must be removed before Shabbat. But if it's a label that people wear — such as designer labels intended to be worn as part of the clothing — then you don't have to remove it before Shabbat. Since people usually remove the label (even a designer label) from the sleeve of a suit jacket, you should do so before Shabbat.

David Waxman <davidwaxman@hotmail.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
I was on Malchei Yisrael street in Jerusalem last Friday shopping for kugel and salads for Shabbos. I found two non-fleishig deli-type places that had what I wanted. Neither of these places had a certificate of kashrut. In one place, the clerk told me that all of the ingredients had the b'datz hechsher [kosher certification of the Rabbinical court]. Both of these places were filled with

customers who looked quite observant. Thus, it seems that people are relying on strength of reputation for the kashrut of these establishments. Put another way, "everyone eats there." Is that enough? Does it make a difference how "frum" and religious the neighborhood is? Does it matter if you are a local resident and know the proprietors?

Dear David Waxman,

Certainly if you know the proprietor personally as a knowledgeable, G-d-fearing Jew, you may eat there. Furthermore, if you don't know the owner personally, but the owner has a reputation of reliability among knowledgeable, observant Jews, then you may rely on that (provided you have no evidence to the contrary).

The simple fact that a store is in a religious neighborhood, however, is not an indication that it's kashrut can be relied upon.

Which reminds me of a story: A woman once entered a deli and asked to see the kashrut certificate.

"Don't worry about it!" said the man behind the counter.

"But how do I know if it's kosher?" she asked.

The man pointed to a black-and-white photo hanging on the wall. "You see that?" he said, gesturing to the angelic face of an old man engrossed in Talmud study. "That was my father!"

"Look," said the woman, "If it was the other way around — if he was behind the counter and your picture was on the wall — I wouldn't ask for the kashrut certificate."

Ed <Ed@email.icrossroads.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
What is the "guff," or is there such a term in Jewish history or tradition? I saw a video entitled "The Seventh Sign" and it mentioned the "guff" in relation to the Hall of Souls. I want to know if it is purely fiction or not. Thank you.

Dear Ed,

The "guff" is a term the Talmud uses to refer to the repository of all unborn souls. Literally, the word "guff" means "body."

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The Talmud says, "The Son of David (*Mashiach*) will not arrive until there's no more 'soul' in the 'body.' " This means that there are a certain number of souls in heaven waiting to be born. Until they are born, they wait in a heavenly repository called "the body." The *Mashiach* won't arrive until every single one of these souls has been born into the physical world.

This teaches that each person is important and has a unique role which only he, with his unique soul, can fulfill. Even a newborn baby brings the *Mashiach* closer simply by being born.

Sources:

- Tractate Yevamot 62a
- Tractate Avodah Zarah 5a

Yiddle Riddle

Shira Phillips <philfam@erols.com> wrote with the following riddle:

Dear Yiddle Riddle people: The following is a story I read about Rashi in a child's Hebrew biography in perhaps fourth grade. Nobody I know has been able to solve the question without help. Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo ben Yitzchak) once went on a journey. On his trip, he wanted to visit a wealthy man to collect money for poor people. When he visited, the man was not at home but his servant was. The servant said that he recognized the great Rashi as a thief who had previously run off with a suit of his master's clothing and forced Rashi to pay for the clothing! Rashi wrote the following Hebrew word on the door five times in a row: The word was spelled "*Shin Lamed Mem Hey*." What did the message mean?

PS Rashi definitely got the hoped-for reaction: The wealthy man contributed to the *tzedaka* and was from then on always a follower of Rashi.

Answer next week...

THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

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

Re: Greece My Palm (Ohrnet Parshat Miketz):

I think the origin of Chanuka gelt dates from the triumphant coinage of silver by the Maccabees. As much of a proclamation of sovereignty as a TV announcement would be in today's world. Bar Kochba did the same, but to less avail.

Edward Simon <esimon@bilbo.bio.purdue.edu>

Re: "Current Candles" (Ohrnet Parshat Miketz) concerning using an electric menorah:

The answer included a ruling by Rabbi Frank about the menorah requiring all the fuel to be present at the outset, and since electricity is generated on demand, this setup is invalid. The answer further stated that using this rationale, a battery-powered menorah should be permitted because the fuel is present from the beginning.

The answer presupposes that electricity is the "fuel" of the electric lamp. Assuming this to be correct, a battery-powered menorah should likewise be invalid, because a battery does not store electricity, per se. It merely stores chemicals which generate electricity on demand, entirely analogous to the current which comes from the wall socket.

The real question, though, is whether electricity is properly considered the fuel of the lamp at all. After all, it is not a substance which is consumed in the production of the light. In an incandescent bulb, a glowing filament produces light. Since, halachically, a glowing piece of metal is considered to be fire, the filament is the fuel; the electricity is simply what caused the filament to be heated in the first place. This is similar to an ordinary glowing piece of metal — the original source which imparted the heat to it is of little consequence. By this rationale, the electric menorah should be permitted.

However, I read a ruling by Rav Ovadiah Yosef some years ago, in which he stated that a valid menorah must have both a fuel source and a wick. For this reason, he stated, lighting a pile of sawdust or a gas jet is invalid, and an electric menorah, which also lacks the two components, is similarly impermissible.

Barak Greenfield <MDinNYC@aol.com>

Although there are differing opinions about using electricity for Shabbos candles, I am not aware of any Posek of stature who has permitted this for Chanukah. On the contrary, it was the opinion of Maran Harav Moshe Feinstein that in order to fulfill the obligation of Chanukah, you have to be the one lighting, and not a generator or in this case a battery. By turning on the switch you only act as a facilitator by opening up the pathways. If there are authorities who permit battery-powered menorahs please inform us who they are.

*Rabbi Yitzchok D. Frankel Cedarhurst, NY
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Re: What if the Greeks had Won & Apocrypha Now (Ohrnet Parshat Miketz)

I enjoyed your Chanukah "Ask the Rabbi" but I wanted to bring to your attention a few things:

- *Pompeii who conquered Israel several years after the Maccabees, was a Roman, not a Greek general. I think he was called in by some of the Hasmonians to intervene in an internal dispute.*
- *What's in the back of the Birnbaum Siddur is the Megillath Antiochus, not the Book of Maccabees as you wrote. It differs in many ways from the Books of the Maccabees.*

*Stanley Nachamie, JLE Israel Summer '88
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