



CLAL

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March 7, 1997
28 Adar I 5757

Inside...

**It's Adar II,
have double
the fun!**

Notice of Change of Address

Effective March 1, 1997,
Sh'ma's new address,
phone and fax will be:

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New York NY 10016
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Sh'ma A JOURNAL OF JEWISH RESPONSIBILITY

Amish

A JOURNAL OF MODEST RESPONSIBILITY

Tashlich supplement Richard J. Israel, Newton Centre MA

Taking a few crumbs to Tashlich from whatever old bread is in the house lacks subtlety, nuance and religious sensitivity, I would suggest that we can do better. Instead, this coming Rosh Hashanah consider these options:

For ordinary sins, use WHITE BREAD
For exotic sins, FRENCH BREAD
For particularly dark sins, PUMPERNICKEL
For complex sins, MULTI-GRAIN
For twisted sins, PRETZELS
For tasteless sins, RICE CAKES
For sins of indecision, WAFFLES
For sins committed in haste, MATZAH
For sins committed in less than eighteen minutes, SHMURAH MATZAH
For sins of chutzpah, FRESH BREAD
For substance abuse, POPPY SEED
For committing arson, TOAST
For committing auto theft, CARAWAY
For being ill-tempered, SOURDOUGH
For silliness, NUT BREAD
For not giving full value, SHORTBREAD
For jingoism, YANKEE DOODLES
For excessive use of irony, RYE BREAD
For telling bad jokes, CORN BREAD
For hardening our hearts, JELLY DOUGH-NUTS
For being money-hungry, ENRICHED BREAD or RAW DOUGH
For war-mongering, KAISER ROLLS
For immodest dressing, TARTS
For causing injury or damage to others, TORTES
For promiscuity, HOT BUNS

For racism, CRACKERS
For sophisticated racism, RITZ CRACKERS
For davvening off tune, FLAT BREAD
For being holier-than-thou, BAGELS
For unfairly upbraiding another, CHALLAH
For indecent photography, CHEESE CAKE
For trashing the environment, DUMPLINGS
For sins of laziness, ANY VERY LONG LOAF

Remember, you don't have to show your crumbs to anyone.

With thanks to friends for wonderful suggestions, in particular to Robby Fein who devised the idea.

More on tashlich

 Claire R. Lee, Cincinnati OH

For sins of pride, PUFF PASTRY
For lying, BAKED GOODS with Nutrasweet and Olestra

 The Reisner Household, New Milford NJ

For wearing tasteless hats, TAM TAMS
For the sins of the righteous, ANGEL FOOD CAKE
For selling your soul, DEVILS FOOD CAKE
For lust in your heart, WONDER BREAD
For inhaling, STONED WHEAT

Masekhta cholent: a purim torah

✉ Robert Appleton, Highland Heights KY

As you know, the recent discovery of the Graceland *geniza* (repository of old sacred texts) has revealed a heretofore unknown 64th *masekhta* (tractate) of the Talmud. This additional *masekhta* was originally thought, from the disintegrating name on its cover, to be simply a volume of *Chulin* (Untithed Produce), but, on closer examination, the name turned out to be not *Chulin*, but *cholent*. Since *Masekhta Cholent* was first identified, we have also been able to understand several obscure ancient manuscripts, which can now be seen to be *payrushim* (commentaries) on this *masekhta*. With the aid of these *payrushim*, I am honored to present the first public discourse on *Masekhta Cholent*.

The first *mishnah* begins: From what time do we eat the *cholent*? *Bays Hillel* says from when *musaf* is finished by the *ba'al tefillah* (the one who leads the congregation in prayer). *Bays Shammai* says by the paid *ba'al tefillah* (that is, the *chazan*). And what is the difference between a *ba'al tefillah* and a *chazan*? An hour and a half.

The *Gemara* begins: But everyone agrees that we first eat and sing, and then we drink (meaning Coke and Pepsi)—because we sing for soft drinks. The *Gemara* continues with an *aggadic* statement as follows: There was an incident when Ben Hay Hay said to Ben Korcha, "If your father had eaten *cholent*, he would have hair on his head." Now the sages were clearly upset with Ben Hay Hay's insensitive remark. In other words, they said to him: Na-na-na-na, na-na-na-na, Ben Hay Hay, Goodbye.

Books in grief—new releases for the jewish library

✉ Dorothy Auerbach, San Francisco CA

Embracing the Strangler

The scourge of Boston finds *teshuvah*

The Bar Meats Va

Life on a Jewish cattle ranch

Celibate Hanukkah

A manual for self-denial

Complete Jewish Weeding Planner

Improve your gardening skills

The Faxer

Tragic life of a Jew addicted to technology

Mouses in the Bulrushes

Mickey and Minnie holiday at the Red Sea

Putting God on the Ghost List

Proves that Halloween is really a Jewish holiday

Rachel the Cleaver

The secret life of Beaver's little sister

Rambum

The Jewish equivalent of a horse's ass

Rashi

The heartbreak of psoriasis

Song of Sung

The Sound of Chinese Jewish Music

God Was In This Palace

Sequel to *George Washington Slept Here*

Great Jews in Spouts

Flood victims speak out

Sh'ma A JOURNAL OF JEWISH RESPONSIBILITY

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March 7, 1997

The Half-Dollar Service

A do-it-yourself service for Jews who can't afford to join a synagogue

Jewish Holiday Kitch

Tacky arts and crafts for the whole family

Jewish Mediation

How to get along with your rabbi

Mangled Roots

Confusion between *maror* and *haroset*

Lentil

A legume crashes the seder disguised as a potato

Teddy Colic

A child's favorite toy gets the flu

Torah, Torah, Torah

Hillel converts the Japanese Air Force

Wrestling With Angels

Geometry for Jewish teens

A late fax from chelm for purim

✍ **Bernard Fischman, New York NY**

Hael (in Chelm we spell our names backwards so that authorities will not be able to find us) asked her father Sesom to meet with her fiance Bocaj who wanted Sesom's permission to marry his daughter.

Sesom asked Bocaj what Bocaj did for a living. Bocaj replied that he was a Yeshiva student. Sesom asked Bocaj if he and Hael were planning to have a family, who would provide for them. Bocaj replied that "God would provide."

After their meeting Hael asked Sesom for his decision. Sesom said "No way, the young man is *meshuga*. He thinks I am God."

Car of the future

✍ **Dan Mosenkis, Fair Lawn NJ**

Nissan—the company named after the month of our liberation—announces a new vehicle for new-agers: the special edition MEVAKESH DERECH (Pathseeker), with exclusive FOUR-WORLD DRIVE (since we all know the road to redemption is unlike any other), and, of course, 12-STEP TRANSMISSION. This vehicle, fulfilling the

"heavenly chariot" vision of Ezekiel chapter 1, lends new meaning to the phrases "all-terrain" (v. 12: "they went wherever the spirit impelled them...") and "all-wheel drive" (v. 21: "for the spirit of the creatures was in the wheels"). Parallel parking? No problem—slip in sideways (v. 17: "each could move in the direction of any of its four quarters"). You're seated high enough to get a complete view of the road ahead and behind (v. 26: "above the expanse over their heads was the semblance of a throne"). Not to mention wheels within wheels (v. 16), custom wheel covers (v. 15) and burnished bronze color scheme (v. 7). Order yours today—no payments due until the World To Come!

Engagements

✍ **Janet Kirchheimer, New York NY**

The Sh'ma Social Register
joyfully announces the
following engagements from among its readers:

Beth Din to Morris Eyin

Sherry Zedek to Ben Zonna

In the news...

✍ **Steve Fox, Bergenfield NJ**

Albright Begins Women's Tefillah At White House

WASHINGTON DC—Madeline Albright, newly appointed Secretary of Defense, has decided to revive her newly discovered Judaism and begin a regularly scheduled Women's Tefillah in the White House, according to press secretary, Mike McCurry. In a prepared statement, Albright said that her role as the highest ranking American woman should be enhanced by her new-found role as the first Jewish woman in the Clinton administration. The schedule of prayer however was very tricky due to her

travel schedule and may revolve around her visits to the soon to be constructed White House *Mikvah*.

Reaction to Ms. Albright's announcement has drawn mixed reviews, with the Va'ad Harabonim of Queens questioning how a woman raised as a Christian could start a *minyán* and stating that even if she were a *rebbetzin*, it would not be acceptable. Blu Greenberg, author and wife of CLAL's Rabbi Yitz Greenberg, was thrilled and has applied for the job of *shul* president.

Others, like Rabbi Cohen of the Hebrew Union College, welcomed the development and was looking forward to converting anyone willing at the new White House *Shul* or *Beit Lavan* as it will be called. Others were more philosophical and felt that Albright will be like another Jewish Secretary of state, Henry Kissinger who was also married to a non-Jew and didn't do much to raise *shul* attendance.

Batman & Rabin To Premier On Israeli TV

ISRAEL—In an effort to immortalize the memory of the late Israeli Prime Minister and war hero Yitzchak Rabin, producers from Israel's Commercial TV have begun production of a new action series called "Batman & Rabin." News of the show prompted angry reaction from the right-wing Likud Party who felt that this would be a vehicle to promote Rabin's old policies. Cabinet Minister, Shulamit Baloney was concerned who the bad guys would be and lobbied to have the super heroes battle Kach and Kahane Chai members rather than Arabs. Speculation was also rampant that the Joker would be played by an Arafat look-a-like and Catwoman would resemble Mrs. Baloney. Most Israelis took it in stride stating that this was just another attempt to imitate American culture and not a political issue. The show is schedule to premier just after the Israeli elections as long as government censors allow. Ratings are expected to be high.

Punster

✍ Alan Yuter, Springfield NJ

Q: What does one call a manual for priests who need to learn how to bless the people?

A: A duchenary

Q: Why does Orthodox Judaism forbid pre-marital sex?

A: It might lead to mixed dancing.

Q: Would you be kind enough to explain why there are two armed guards at the grave of the late leader of Lubavitch, R. Menahem Mendel Shneerson, MaMaSH.

A: You ought to read the Yiddish newspapers. It is reported that the Rebbe is afraid to rise from the grave because he had gotten death threats.

Q: We are taught that all Israel has a portion in the eternity to come. Where will the Jews be placed in this eternity?

A: They will be placed in the Garden of Yiden.

Pirkei avot rabba

✍ Richard Hirsh, Evanston IL

Pirkei Avot Rabba (The "Ethics of the Ancestors" formerly known as the "Chapters of the Fathers"): A reconstruction of a fragmentary text discovered in Qumran cave #613.

1. All Israel have a share, or at least a dividend, in the world to come; Moses received the Torah at Sinai, and passed it down to Joshua, who handed it on to the prophets, who transmitted it to the Men of the Great Assembly, who handed it to the Bar Mitzvah boy.
2. Simeon the Realtor taught: The world rests on three things: location, location, and location.
3. Rabbi Nech[ama] of Berk[ley] said: If I am not for myself, will you be there for me? But if I am only there for you, where am I? And if not now, maybe tomorrow. Whatever.
4. Rabbi Or[ech Di]n taught: Make His will your will so that He will make your will His will so as to avoid probate; set aside your will before His will so that He will set aside the will of others before [they contest] your will.
5. Hillel taught: an ignorant man cannot be pious, but that never stopped anyone.
6. Yohanan asked: See the highest contact one can make: Eliezar said, a good lawyer; Yossi said, a good accountant; Simeon said, a doctor who makes house calls.
7. Rabbi Shaon taught: The day is short, so let's go home early; the work is too much, so we might as well stop now; the workers are tired, but who can blame them; and the Boss is demanding, but hey, we've got a contract.

8. He also taught: It is not your duty to finish the work.
9. Rabbi Akavya taught: All is foreseen, yet freedom of choice is given. Explain in 500 words or less how this is possible.
10. Rabbi Jacob taught: Better is one hour of repentance in this world than the entire world-to-come; better is one hour in the world-to-come than a time-share in Miami.
11. Rabbi Yakov said: This world is like a corridor before the world-to-come; therefore wipe your feet.

Genes, genes, genes

☞ Avi Rockoff, Newtonville MA

NEWS ITEM: Genetic research has shown that the “Y” chromosome of *kohanim* is distinctive and points to a common priestly ancestor in remote antiquity.

THE SONG OF THE FIRST KOHEN (Sung to “I Enjoy Being A Girl”)

If you call yourself a *kohen*
And you're tracing your ancestry
Then I'm sorry if I sound so vain
But you all started with me!

If your priestly pride's egregious
and you're nuts for your family tree
Just call up Kathy Lee and Regis
Tell 'em you started with me!

Listen up all you Cohens, Kahns, and Katzes
Pay attention to what I am gonna say
That the prime begetter of all your begats is
My primordial pristine priestly DNA!

If you sometimes get splenetic
When insulted to some degree
Well your spluttering spleen's genetic
And your spleen started with me!

If you plan on *bentshing gomel*
Step right up with alacrity
It's your birthright! It's chromosomal!
And with absolutely no doubt
You all started out
With meeeeeee!

Congregation house of rest

☞ Michael Shekel, Randolph MA

While the synagogue has traditionally been touted as a house of prayer, learning and assembly, one of its most important functions is rarely discussed in Jewish tradition. This is the role of the synagogue as *mikdash menuha* “the sanctuary of rest.”

Over the centuries, the custom developed of attending Shabbat services in order to fulfill the *mitzvah* of rest. Works from the Middle Ages discuss the appropriate time in which to fulfill this commandment. The more lenient Sephardic rabbis allow it from the beginning of the Torah reading until the *Aleinu*. They viewed the numerological significance of 40 winks as symbolizing Moses' being on Mount Sinai for 40 days. Their more stringent Ashkenazi colleagues forbade shut-eye at any point in the service, claiming that 40 symbolized the number of years of punishment spent by the children of Israel in the wilderness.

It is not often that we discuss the influence of Hasidism on liberal Judaism, but this influence cannot be ignored where the *mitzvah* of the “day of rest” is concerned. All modern temples are beholden to the Snorer Rebbe (not to be confused with the Shnorrer Rebbe) for encouraging sleep during the service. In distinction to the Sephardic tradition, sleeping was deemed appropriate only during the rabbi's sermon.

With the rise of Reform Judaism in Germany in the early 19th century, the custom changed owing to the difficulty of all resting in unison. Instead, women would stifle their yawns behind elegant fans, while men would lean on their hands, seemingly engaged in the sermonic material. Today, in egalitarian congregations, both men and women doze equally, hiding their visages behind the *siddur*, the temple bulletin, or even a newspaper. In the Reform and Conservative movements, the culmination of this ideal was the creation of the junior congregation, which granted both parents some badly needed shut-eye while their children learned to observe Shabbat as the day of joy.

In the seminaries and *yeshivot* of all movements, future rabbis hone their sermonic skills in order to empower their congregants to snooze in shul. The abilities needed to create lengthy sermons of dubious content and structure are essential for ordination. The faculty who teach these courses follow the philosophy of teaching by example, resulting in few wide-awake attendees.

In the light of Jewish tradition and at the urging of the UAHC, we at Temple Shaarei Sheinah (Gates of Sleep) will proudly preserve our customs. I as rabbi will do my part. I hope that you will do yours.

Overheard

✍ Samuel M. Silver, Delray Beach FL

Q: Why is there a woman's balcony in the shul?

A: Because it is written: "Man is a little lower than the angels."

Explained a youngster to a gentile friend: "There are three kinds of Jews: Reform, Conservative and Orthodontists."

When a group of youngsters were bragging about how tough their fathers were, the son of a rabbi said, "You think your father is tough. My father's the graduate of a Reform school."

Updated list of prohibited foods, purim 5757

✍ Gershon Schwartz, Baldwin NY

Ten years ago, we inaugurated our list of goods prohibited by the Unorthodox Union of Super-Frum Congregations, know in the trade of the "Oy-You." At the time, we advised those Jews who did not want to be listed in the annual directory of "Jews not Super-Frum Enough to Marry" to avoid certain food products. Among them were Uncle Ben's Converted Rice (a question regarding who officiated at the rice's conversion) and Goya Foods (the food may have been prepared by a real idolater and hence, *treif*). This year, the "Oy-You" has added the following to the prohibited list:

Karo Syrup (for Ashkenazim only). We know that Joseph Karo (also spelled Caro) wrote the Shulchan Aruch, the great Sephardic compendium of laws. Thus, Karo Syrup is kosher only for Sephardim. At the insistence of the Super-Frum Union, CPC International will soon be producing a second version of their corn syrup, to be called "Rema Syrup," specifically for use by Ashkenazic Jews who rely on the Rema, Rabbi Moses Isserles, the master who made the Shulchan Aruch authoritative for Ashkenazic Jews.

Bumble Bee Tuna. In the past, the Super-Frum Union prohibited Chicken of the Sea, though it has the O-U/Dairy symbol on the package, because people might think

that the contents are not *tuna* but *chicken*. Now, the Oy-You has prohibited Bumble Bee because of various reports that yeshiva students assumed that the contents were not tuna but bees, which are *treif*.

Mr. Clean. Though this is not a food product, the Oy-You considers it one of the most serious cases. Several rabbis on the Oy-You's Bes Din reported complaints that Jewish wives were being left alone in their homes with a scantily clad man (and a non-Jew at that!). One Super-Frum therapist even reported that a patient of his had fantasized about leaving her husband and twelve children and—in her words—"starting a clean slate and a new life of liberation and experimentation with Mr. Clean." Because of these reports, the Oy-You has issued a ban against leaving Mr. Clean alone with any woman.

Masekhet Hog-im

✍ Shohama Wiener, New Rochelle NY

A document recently discovered in the Academy's *geniza* indicates that the origins of Purim are in the ancient pagan festival, Groundhog Day, Masekhet Hog-im.

Mishnah: Groundhog day falls on the 2nd of February. If the day is sunny and the groundhog sees his shadow when he comes out of his hole, he is fearful and runs back into his hole. This means there will be another six weeks of winter. If the day is cloudy and he does not see his shadow, he stays outside for a long time. This means spring will come soon.

Gemara: Why Groundhog day?

Said Rav Jung, "Because everyone needs to deal with their shadow, and on Groundhog Day we sublimate all our fears onto the shadow of the groundhog. Like the goat that bears our sins on Yom Kippur, the groundhog takes on the fears of the community."

Many thanks to all our other contributors

David L. Bruck, Rio Piedras PR
Marvin Dickman, Highland Park IL
Mordechai Friedfertig, Teaneck NJ
Dr. Wallace Greene, Whippany NJ
Michele Kriegman, Morristown NJ
Rabbi Jonathan Waxman, West End NJ

Dvar Aher (another teaching). Said Reb Shlomo in the name of Reb Nachman, “All of our texts are deep, but Megillat Groundhog is the deepest of the deep. The deeper the depth of the groundhog hole, the higher the groundhog can go in climbing out.”

The wise child asked, “How far does the groundhog need to go out of his hole before returning in order for us to determine whether he returns out of fear, or out of fatigue?” Some say, if he goes less than 4 cubits, we may assume it is out of fear. But others say, if he goes less than 400 parsangs.

Rab Nudnick raised the problem, “But what if he runs in circles? How many circles does it take to equal 400 parsangs?”

Rab Obvious said, “A groundhog who runs in circles is automatically disqualified. Running in circles leads to dizziness, and some say to prophecy, but we no longer rely on prophecy. We must wait to see a groundhog who can run in a straight line.”

Said Bruria’s half-sister once removed, “Either it’s sunny or it’s not. Who needs a groundhog to tell if spring is coming?”

The wise ones said, “Spring always comes, but we need to see our shadows. Let’s create a holiday in which we all deal with our shadows. We’ll call it Purim.”

KtM: The answer is Jethro. And the question is “What relative of Moses was the leader of the tribe, the Clampetts?”

EbM: Next envelope four.

KtM: The answer is auto-emancipation. And the question is “What Israeli law forbids the driving of cars in religious neighborhoods?”

EbM: And now number five.

KtM: The answer is a classroom, a Passover meal, and a latke. And the question is “What is a cheder, a seder and a tater?”

EbM: Envelope number six.

KtM: The answer is softer. And the question is “On what do Jews recline during the Passover seder?”

EbM: The next envelope.

KtM: The answer is tzitzit. And the question is “Name a disease carrying Mediterranean fly.”

EbM: Envelope number eight.

KtM: The answer is *A Bintel Brief*. And the question is “What do you call the underwear worn by Jewish men?”

EbM: The ninth envelope.

KtM: The answer is Babylon. And the question is “What does the rabbi do during his sermons?”

EbM: And now the last envelope. (loud applause).

KtM: May an Empire chicken lay a giant *kreplach* on your *keppelch*. The final answer is kishka, sukkah, and circumcision. And the question is, “Name a gut, a hut, a cut.”

Kharnak

✍ Mark D. Zimmerman, Melville NY

Shalom. I’m Ed ben Maimon, and I’m pleased to present Kharnak the Magnificent. I hold in my hand ten envelopes. You, Kharnak, oh great seer, soothsayer, and kabbalist, will amaze us all by divining the answers to the questions within, having never before seen the contents of the envelopes...

KtM: Halevai, I could do that!

EbM: I know you can do it, oh great and powerful *Chakham*. So please, let us proceed. The first envelope.

KtM: The answer is midrash. And the question is “Name a skin disease common in the Middle East.”

EbM: Number Two

KtM: The answer is the Gaza strip. And the question is “What’s the latest Middle Eastern belly dance?”

EbM: Envelope number three.

The prophets

Barbara Sherrod, Fort Collins CO

(to the tune of “A Modern Major General”)

There’s Jeremiah, Obadiah, Zephaniah, Haggai,
There’s Jonah, Zachariah, there is Habakkuk and
Malachi,

There’s Micah, Joel, Ezekiel, there’s Amos and Hosea,
There’s Nahum and of course we mustn’t leave out each
Isaiah.

If ’ere the Jews forgot our duty, these are the guys who’d
kick our bootie,
’Cause they would never pussyfoot, the prophets of the
Torah. (repeat names)

If the Hebrews idolized, in scolding us they specialized,
These are our people’s great wise guys, the prophets of
the Torah.

RIETS vs REITS: ending the confusion

✍ **Gershon Schwartz, Baldwin NY**

Recently, there has been considerable confusion, especially in the Orthodox world, between two acronyms that are both popular and both in the news. In order to help the entire Jewish community understand these two terms, we have enlisted the help of the Gragger Rebbe, *Shlit'a*, to explain the similarities and differences. Though they sound the same, the two are really quite different!

REITS

Real Estate Investment TrustS

Founded in the 1960s
Always interested in profits
Rewards in this world
Yields are usually liberal (often 95% of income distributed)
Located all over, wherever money is to be made
To be legal, beneficial membership must be held by 100 or more people
Speculation about future encouraged
Deviance from traditional approach sought out and desirable
Emphasis on condos and offices
Answers to the Securities and Exchange commission
Shares traded over the counter and on exchanges
Motto: "Bigger is better"

RIETS

Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary

Founded in 1890s
Sometimes interested in prophets
Rewards in the next world
Approach is usually conservative (with a small c, please!)
Located in one place, Manhattan's Washington Heights
To be legal, must have 1,000s of students—all male
Speculation about future discouraged
Deviance from traditional approach undesirable and prohibited
Emphasis on Talmud and codes
Answers to a higher authority, the YU Board
Shiurim given all day long and even on vacation
Motto: "Frummer is better"

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