



## Two Shields

Rabbi Yosef Dovid Rothbart, Rabbinic Administrator

Here's a riddle: What language were the *aseres hadibros* said in? According to Rav Nechemia (Tanchuma Yoson, Pesikta, Yalkut Shemoni) it began with the Egyptian language. What is the significance of that?

The Jewish nation is guarded by two shields – the shield of Avraham (מגן אברהם) and the shield of Dovid (מגן דוד). Rav Tzadok (Likutei Ma'amarim) explains that the Jewish people have two different connections to *Hashem*. The first connection comes from our being descendants of the *Avos*. Every member of the Jewish nation is connected to their Creator through the collective attachment of the entire Jewish people. This is what we refer to when we mention *magen Avraham*. We refer to the guarantee that we were given that *Hashem* will forever protect the bond that He has with the descendants of Avraham. Every Jew, simply because he is Jewish, has an unbreakable attachment to his Creator by being a part of the Jewish people. And even if he has sunken into the abyss, he is still a Jew – ישראל הוא .

But we do not only have a national relationship with *Hashem*. Each Jewish person also has a personal relationship with Him as well. This is represented by Dovid – the king who symbolizes the heart of the Jewish people; the person whose role it is to understand every individual Jew. Each Jewish person has a personal and unique attachment unrelated to other members of the nation. It is about this private connection we recite the *bracha* of *magen Dovid* – the shield of Dovid. Not only is it impossible for a Jew to give up his status of being a descendant of Avraham, a Jew is unable to undermine his own unique holiness that he was granted with his *neschama*.

The Zohar (Va'eira) writes that the *galus* of *Mitzrayim* was a *galus* of speech. Indeed, when the Jewish nation suffered from their oppression they did not express this in words. They cried out, they moaned, but they did not speak. The redeemer, Moshe, struggled with his ability to speak. However, the Zohar continues, sound was not affected by this exile.

Sound is a general reality which has unlimited potential. Speech breaks down the sound into parts and gives it meaning. Rav Tzadok explains that sound represents the holiness and unique relationship of the collective Jewish people. That relationship was never in *galus*. The Jewish people always felt a connection to *Hashem* due to their being descendants of the *Avos*. But they discounted their own individual relationship with their Creator. The speech, which symbolized the individual connections, was in exile; for the Jewish nation did not believe in their own individual holiness and connection to *Hashem*. This was the *galus* of *Mitzrayim*. Indeed, the *galus* began after the *shevatim* left the world and the Jewish people felt undeserving without the spiritual bulwark of their parents and grandparents. They then succumbed to slavery feeling undeserving of any rights.

But then the nation was redeemed. They were taken out of exile and shown how besides the national relationship, each Jew has a personal bond with *Hashem*. They were brought to *Har Sinai* where each Jew was given his part of Torah; his portion that only he could reveal, and this awareness was concretized.

Perhaps it could be said that this is why the *aseres hadibros* was said in the singular. *Hashem* was highlighting the individual attachment that each Jewish person has. He turned to ever single Jew with the words "I took **you** out of *Mitzrayim*." Not only as a member of the collective nation, but as an individual because I have a unique relationship to you.

It was for this purpose that *Hashem* began the *dibros* in the language of the immoral Egyptian nation. He was expressing the depth of this relationship. He was conveying an important message to every member of the Jewish people; that even if they sink so low that they are no longer able to understand the refined language of the Torah; even if they are so full of iniquity that the only language that they can comprehend is the depraved words of the most degenerate nation in existence, אנכי די אלוקיך – I am still your *Hashem* – I have a bond with each one of you which could never be severed.

# Your First Choice

In the previous edition an unmarried chasid was advised by the Magid to agree to the first shidduch that was offered. Following the advice of his rebbe, he ended up marrying the daughter of an innkeeper who was offered to him as a joke. He had to run out of the inn as the jokesters began to hit him in their excitement and he returned only the next morning. As he stood outside the inn he heard one of the servants say, "Here comes the father of the bride."

The young chasan approached the innkeeper and wished him a good morning, "How are you my new father-in-law?"

The innkeeper recoiled and turned to one of the servants. "Who is this person? What is he talking about?"

His daughter who had entered the room at that moment was the one who answered the question. "This young man was a great sport last night. He agreed to act as a chasan in a mock chasuna. He wrote the kesuba and we had a chuppa. After that the guests danced for many hours. It was really entertaining and you will be delighted when you hear how much food and liquor was sold."

Her father did not find the situation as amusing as his daughter did. He started firing questions to figure out what exactly happened. What he heard made him furious.

Enraged, he began to scream at the young chasid. "How in the world could you go ahead and marry my daughter? Maybe the fools who hang out here have no idea about the implications of their little joke. But based on your appearance you know very well what you had just done. How do you dare marry someone who thinks that she is playing a game and has zero desire to really marry you?" And with that, he slapped the young man across the face.

Breathing heavily, with a disgusted look, he turned around to leave. But he caught himself. He realized that his behaviour could exacerbate the situation. What would happen if his new son-in-law would not be willing to let his daughter marry someone more appropriate for her?

So he returned and tried a different tact. He offered the young man twenty rubles for the hassle if he would give his daughter a divorce. To his surprise, the young man - who looked like quite destitute - refused. The innkeeper raised his offer several times, but each time encountered a similar response.

Finally the young chasid interrupted the innkeeper as he began to raise the offer yet again. "Listen," he began. "I

will be honest. My refusal has nothing to do with money. I am a follower of the Magid. He had told me to agree to the first match I was offered, and that's what I did. Maybe this group saw the whole thing as a joke, but I took it seriously. I accepted the offer in accordance with the Magid's instructions and unless he tells me otherwise, I will remain married."

A few days later the innkeeper found himself standing in front of the Magid together with his newest relative. "One day, when I was away from my inn, your follower checked in and believed a bunch of jokesters who told him that my daughter was their sister. Based on your advice he accepted their marriage proposal to the woman and had a proper wedding. When I found out I offered him money to grant her a divorce, but he did not agree. Without your explicit consent, he will not do so. I am now ready to offer him a hundred rubles as long as he agrees to give my daughter a divorce. Could you please speak to him?"

The Maggid agreed.

When the innkeeper returned after a few hours, the Maggid told him that the young chasid was willing to allow his daughter to marry someone else provided that he is given a thousand rubles. "But what about your daughter? Isn't it the time for her to marry? Allow me to offer you a great match for her. I know a young man, a learned and God-fearing Jew, who comes from a family of fine lineage and is himself a man of excellent character..."

The innkeeper was listening intently now.

"The intended boy has only one drawback," Maggid continued. "He is quite poor. And because of his poverty he makes an unattractive impression. But now that matter has worked out too. You see, he has just received a thousand rubles of money that he will bring with him to marriage."

"You see," Rabbi Dov Ber concluded, "there is no need for a divorce. I assure you this is a match from heaven. I wish you both to go home and the young couple to live happily ever after."

The innkeeper took to heart the Rebbe's advice and went home happily with his son-in-law.

---

## How Can H.I.T. Help You?

Are you involved in a dispute that is taking too long to resolve? Mediation is a powerful tool that helps parties settle their disputes. H.I.T. Rabbonim are certified mediators who can help resolve disputes within a halachic framework.

To book a consultation or to find out more information please call (416) 535-8008 or email [info@halachainstitute.com](mailto:info@halachainstitute.com)



# Questions

from  
the **H.I.T.**  
**HOTLINE**

**I am making a *pidyon haben* this week and I had two questions about this *mitzva*. Why does the *Kohen* give me the choice of redeeming my child or not? Also, would I be able to have a *kohenes* serve as the *kohen* for the *pidyon*?**

The first question you have asked was raised by the Terumas Hadeshen (*siman* 235). In Minchas Shlomo (1, 62) Rav Shlomo Zalman suggests that this was instituted for those who do not understand what is being accomplished by the *pidyon haben* ceremony. An unlearned person may mistakenly think that he is merely giving money to the *kohen* without appreciating that he is in fact redeeming his child. Therefore, it was instituted that the *kohen* offer the father the “option” of choosing to keep the five coins and not redeem his firstborn in order that the father understand the nature of the ceremony.

The Pischei Teshuva (305, 15) suggests a different answer. He posits that the *kohen* offers the choice in order to engender a desire to redeem the child. This is done in order to mitigate the concern that the father will redeem his child solely because the *Torah* instructed him to without any true desire to do so. It is possible then the child is not considered to be redeemed since a

forced redemption is not considered to be a redemption.

Regarding your second question, Tosafos do suggest that this may be done. The Gemara (*kedushin* 8a) describes Rav Kahana serving as the *kohen* by a *pidyon haben*. Tosafos point out that although his name would indicate that he was a *kohen*, in reality he was not. In one answer they explain that he was taking the coins on behalf of his wife who was a *kohenes*.

However, many *rishonim* do not agree to the assertion of Tosafos and maintain that only a male *kohen* may perform a *pidyon haben*. Indeed, the Chasam Sofer (*Yoreh Deah* 301) writes that the *pidyon* must be performed by a male *kohen*.

The Chasam Sofer does conclude though that if a person finds himself without any access to a *kohen* and he is concerned that he will not be able to perform the *mitzva* of *pidyon haben* if he waits until one arrives, he should perform the *mitzva* with a *kohenes* without reciting a *bracha*. He should stipulate that if he later finds a male *kohen* then he is not intending to fulfill the *mitzva* with her. If at a later date he does find a *kohen* he should redeem himself a second time.

**To have your question  
answered call  
H.I.T. at (416) 535-8008  
or email  
[info@halachainstitute.com](mailto:info@halachainstitute.com)**





In this week's Parsha Hashem descended on Har Sinai amidst thunder and lightning. Here are some interesting facts about lightning.

- A man named Walter Summerford was struck by lightning three times in his life. After his death, his gravestone was also struck.
- When the 15 million volts of electricity hit a tree branch, the heat travels through the tree, vaporizing its sap and creating steam that causes the trunk to explode.
- Those who are struck by lightning are often temporarily covered with what's known as red Lichtenberg figures, which are branching, tree-like patterns created by the passage of high voltage electrical discharges along the skin.
- A single bolt of lightning is around 50,000 Fahrenheit or five times hotter than the surface of the sun.

## RIDDLE



How long was the actual time duration of *Matan Torah* by *Har Sinai*?

Please send in your answers to [yrothbart@halachainstitute.com](mailto:yrothbart@halachainstitute.com). Any correct answer that is received by Tuesday will be entered into a raffle to win a \$10 gift certificate to Miriam's Judaica.

**LAST WEEK'S RIDDLE:** When is a person subject to death by *beis din* if he ate kosher meat but not if he had eaten non-kosher meat?

**ANSWER:** A *ben sorer umoreh* is subject to the death penalty if he eats meat in a specific manner. The meat that he eats must be kosher. If he eats non-kosher meat, he will not be liable for the death penalty. (*Rambam Hilchos Mamrim 7, 1*)

Thank you to all those who sent in an answer to last week's riddle.

**WINNER OF LAST WEEK'S PRIZE:** Aron Laufer

Under the leadership of the Rabbonim of H.I.T.  
Rabbi Yacov Felder, Chairman

HALACHA LINE • RABBINIC MEDIATION • ESTATE PLANNING • ERUVIN •  
CRITICAL CARE QUESTIONS • HALACHIC BUSINESS CONSULTATION •  
HALACHIC DOCUMENT DRAFTING • AND MORE

Halacha Institute of Toronto  
[info@halachainstitute.ca](mailto:info@halachainstitute.ca) | (416) 535-8008



HALACHA  
INSTITUTE  
*of Toronto*

H.I.T.