



Ohr Somayach Light Lines

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Light Insight

“And we said to my lord that we have a father who is very old and the youngest [brother] is a child of [his] old age.” (Genesis 44:20)

“We have a father who is very old” — our “father” represents the ancient heritage of the Jewish People. Our continued success in surviving and flourishing as a holy nation is founded on keeping faith with our heritage, staying true to the teachings of our “father.” We also have “a youngest brother” — those unborn generations to whom we have the responsibility to pass on the torch of the Torah. We are the link in the chain between the past — “our father” and the future — “our

youngest brother.” No matter how much pressure there is on us in the present, we have a duty both to “our father” and to “our youngest brother” that this golden chain from the past to the future remains unbroken.

“Joseph sustained his father and his brothers and all his father’s household with food according to the children.” (Genesis 47:12)

One of the less pleasant aspects of survival in the corridors of power is having friends in high places. It’s not what you know, it’s who you know. However, profiting from special ‘insider’ status is totally contradictory to the way a Jew

behaves in public life. We learn this from Joseph in this week’s Torah portion.

Joseph is the archetypal “court Jew.” He is respected and needed by the state. He commands tremendous power. But he never uses his power to feather his own nest. When Joseph’s father and his brothers come down to Egypt in the midst of a ravaging famine, he could quite easily have cut through the red tape and given them a disproportionate amount of food. However, he gave them only “according to the children,” according to their number and no more. Joseph’s family received no more than anyone else in the country despite their brother’s supreme status.

LOVE of the LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel

Four Cubits To Eternity

“Whoever walks a distance of four cubits in the Land of

of Rabbi Yochanan is based on the passage (*Isaiah 42:5*) in which G-d is described as forming the ‘land’ of Israel and ‘giving life to those

Israel is assured of being a member of the World to Come.”

This statement cited in the name

who walk in it.’

Our Sages saw such a powerful link between the Land of Israel and the World to Come that one of them even declared that resurrection of the dead will take place only in the Land of Israel and the remains of those buried elsewhere will have to roll to the Land of Israel through special tunnels created for them.

Light Update

Ohr Somayach Jerusalem welcomed the Shores Program last week, a group of over forty students arriving from South Africa on their month-long summer visit to Israel. The program

includes classes and lectures by the senior faculty such as Rabbi Dr. Yitzchak Breitowitz and Rabbi Dr. David Gottlieb, as well as extensive tours of the historic and breath-taking sights of the Land of Israel.

The Other SIDE of the Story

GIVING PEOPLE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

If his friends had judged favorably, the fellow in the following incident wouldn't be saying....

Call Me Mr. Cats

Recently we have had serious cat problems in my neighborhood. So much so that people have joked about actually going out and killing them.

One night about a month ago I was bringing the trash cans up to the front of my house when I

noticed that there was a cat inside. I yelled, "Go away cat!" and chased it out of the can. The cat jumped up screamed and in the process of running away it squeezed an open ketchup bottle at me, staining me from head to toe with red gook.

Some neighbors, hearing the commotion, ran to check if everything was all right. Embarrassed, I nodded politely. The next day my co-worker, who also lives in the neighborhood, commented how he was grateful that someone had finally taken some serious initiative in destroying the cats. As it turns out, one of the neighbors had spread a nasty rumor that I had violently bashed a cat's head in. Even though I have

repeatedly denied this and explained the situation several times, people in my neighborhood still insists on calling me "cat-the-ripper," which not only does not make sense but has made this awkward incident all the more uncomfortable. If only my neighborhood would have assumed correctly that the red gook on me was ketchup. Please remind your readers of how to properly judge people.

If you know unflattering information about someone, you are not allowed to "let the cat out of the bag" except under the strict conditions set forth in the book "Chofetz Chaim." and all the more so when your information is based on mere hearsay or circumstantial evidence.

Response Line

"And Let Us Say..."

Leetal Rivlin wrote:

*Dear Rabbi,
What are the origins of the word 'amen'? When does it first appear in the Torah? When does it first appear in other religious practices? Thank you.*

Dear Leetal Rivlin,
"Amen" first appears in the Torah

in Numbers, chapter 5, verse 22: "And the woman shall say 'amen, amen'." The context there is that a woman is being administered an oath. Saying *amen* is her acceptance of the oath as true, and that she accepts the consequences of the oath if she is lying. In this sense, the word *amen* means "true."

The letters of *amen*, "*alef mem nun*," are also seen by our Sages as an acrostic hinting to the phrase "*(K)el Melech Ne'eman*" — "G-d, the faithful King."

Perhaps the first place it can be seen as said in a "religious" ritual is at the end of Psalm 41, which ends the first of the five books of Psalms. There, King David says, "Blessed is the L-rd, G-d of Israel, for ever and ever; *amen* and *amen*." This verse is very similar to what we call a "blessing," and it ends with "*amen*."

Sources indicate that *amen* was said after blessings at least as early as the beginning of the Second Temple period. There's no evidence that this was when it was first introduced, and it very likely goes back much farther.