

**BUBBIE'S & ZAYDEE'S GUIDE  
FOR THE PERPLEXED...JEWISHLY**

Dear Bubbie,

I had dinner at a friend's house Friday night. Before we sat down to eat, her grandmother lit a pair of candlesticks and then tried to blow them out by waving her hands around them. Well, they were still lit, so I leaned over and blew them out. Bubbie, you never heard such yelling in all your life. So, what did I do wrong?

Sincerely, Ben Chlicht

*Dear Ben,*

*On Friday evenings we light at least two candles to usher in Shabbat. Once the candles are lit we do not blow them out, touch them or move them unless, of course, they're too close to the windows and you accidentally set the drapes on fire. It is traditional for the person lighting the candles to wave her hands around the flames three times to symbolically bring the light of Shabbat into the home.*

*May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Bubbie*

Dear Zaydee,

I'm so confused. I always thought that we are supposed to light two candles before Shabbat, but yesterday I had dinner at the Cohen's and they lit five candles. I thought maybe they were celebrating an additional holiday, but I checked my calendar when I got home and the only holiday listed was Shabbat. So, what's going on?

Sincerely, Zach Korushmor

*Dear Zach,*

*The custom of lighting two candles is linked to the two different versions of the Ten Commandments that appear in the Torah. "Shamor" – observe the Sabbath day is found in Exodus, and "Zachor" – "remember" is found in Deuteronomy. Two words for one commandment are represented by the lighting of two candles. It is also a tradition for many women to light one additional candle for each child in her family.*

*May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Zaydee*

Dear Bubbie,

I am planning a move to the northernmost part of Siberia and I have a problem. When do I light Shabbat candles during those Friday nights when the sun never really sets or rises?

Sincerely, Sy Beeria

*Dear Sy,*

*Hmmm, could it be that weeks go by and Shabbat never ends or never begins? Well the answer is quite simple. The rabbis have declared that you use the established lighting time for the largest city to your south. By lighting candles, we are sanctifying time for a spiritual purpose. So regardless of the position of the sun, we still want a day of rest on the seventh day of the week.*

*May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Bubbie*

Dear Zaydee,

I don't get it. I was at a friend's house for Shabbat dinner and they asked if I wanted to lead the Kiddush. Well, I said of course and recited the one-liner ending with borei p'rei hagafen and took a sip of wine. You should have seen the looks I got. So, tell me Zaydee, where did all that extra stuff come from?

Sincerely, Perry Hagafen

*Dear Perry,*

*It is unclear when our present version of the Friday night and Saturday morning Kiddush were written. However, it is probable that many different Rabbis in ancient times recited different, creative, original versions of Kiddush in their own personal practice. However, over time, several versions became popular and recited more and more often until an "official" version appeared in the first prayer book, of Amram haGaon, in the 9th century.*

*May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Zaydee*

Dear Bubbie,

I had dinner at my Principal's house last Shabbat. The food wasn't too bad, and I think it was kosher, too. Anyway,

she had us do something really strange. First we sat down, then we said Kiddush over the grape juice, and then she made us get up and wash our hands. Wasn't it kind of rude of her to assume that our hands were dirty, and, if she was so concerned, why didn't she ask us to wash our hands before we sat down? What was the point? She didn't even have any soap for us to use, although she did let us use this really nice two-handled cup to pour the water over our hands. So Bubbie what's going on?

Sincerely, Al Nitylat

*Dear Al,*

*Oh, I don't think that she was concerned about dirty hands. After we make Kiddush over the wine and before we say Motzi over the bread, we "ritually" wash our hands and say a special blessing. Usually we use a special two-handled cup to pour the water over each hand. Then we remain silent until we say haMotzi. Remaining silent is the most difficult part of the whole ritual.*

*May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Bubbie*

Dear Zaydee,

Last Friday night we had dinner at my cousin Bluma's house. As we said HaMotzi over the challah, she accidentally spilled some salt on the table and then she used a piece of challah to wipe it up. And if that wasn't enough of a shocker, she ate the piece of challah she used to clean up the salt and even expected us to eat some of it too! Why didn't she just use a sponge or a paper towel to clean up the salt spill? What kind of weird cleaning habit is that? We hate to think of what she uses to mop the floor!

Sincerely, Carl Lahh

*Dear Carl,*

*Your cousin is not as strange as she seems. It is part of haMotzi (the blessing over the bread) to dip the challah into salt before eating it. Why do we do this? Because it turns our table into an altar, which is a reminder of the sacrifices which were made in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, and helps to hook us up with God. In Leviticus 2:3 we are told that "all your meat offerings, you shall salt." So we sprinkle salt on the table, symbolically making it as pure as the altar. The we dip our challah and, in doing so, make a special effort to welcome God to our meal.*

*May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Zaydee*

Dear Bubbie,

During winter break we took a road trip to visit my cousins at their farm in Kansas. Since we keep kosher and didn't think that there was any kosher food west of the Hudson River, we brought a trunkful of food with us. Believe it or not, we passed a store called circle-K - K. That's a symbol of kashrut, so we ran inside and guess what? They sold pork. Now Bubbie does this mean that in the mid-west a pig is kosher? I thought that this symbol meant that everything's kosher?

Sincerely, Trey F. Kah

*Dear Trey,*

*Believe it or not, in America there are over 400 rabbinical supervision agencies with over 400 different "kosher symbols" overseeing the production of food and making sure that it meets strict kashrut standards. The most well-known organization is the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations and their symbol is the familiar circle-OU. The letter "K" by itself is not really acceptable because it cannot be trademarked. As you travel across the country, it might be difficult for you to recognize each of the 400 symbols, so if you're not sure, look on the back of the label near the ingredients. If it is truly a kosher food product you will see the name of the certifying organization or rabbi listed. Now as to a "K" in a circle-K, that's okay if you find it on a label but not on a store. You just happened to have stumbled upon the Circle K chain of convenience stores.*

*May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Bubbie*

Dear Bubbie,

I sort of know how to daven shacharit at my synagogue, but what do I do at home? Where do I stand? Where do I sit? Do I even have to get out of bed? I know the minimum amount of what I have to say from those charts that our lovely education director distributed in her adult education classes, but should I assume that the maximum consists of everything else? And finally, believe it or not, when I daven shacharit, I'm all by myself. Anyway, so what do I do when I get to the stuff where you need a minyan? And how do I really know if I'm doing the right thing? You have about 22 hours before I daven again so please reply soon.

Sincerely, Beth Meetah

*Dear Beth,*

*Even though I know you want us to tell you how to pray when you're alone, Zaydee and I want to encourage you to get up, get dressed and find a minyan. The rabbis (the ones in the Talmud) tell us that God pays a bit more attention to the prayers of a congregation than to the prayers of an individual. Where do they get this notion? They looked at Psalm 69:1. (Please look it up for yourself. With our new e-mail address we are swamped with letters and hardly have time to answer them all. Thank you.) And if that wasn't enough, the rabbis (yep, those boys in the Talmud again) tell us that when at least ten get together to pray, the Shekhina prays with them. The Shekhina is God's "presence" hovering over the world.*

*Now we all know how God feels about communal prayer, but how do we as people feel about it? First of all, most of our prayers were written in the plural and not the singular so that says something. Secondly, communal prayer has a powerful influence on strengthening the Jewish community. Thirdly, it has been said that a Jew who regularly worships with a congregation is never alone.*

*So, nu...Go pray with your community. You'll be glad you did. But if you must pray alone, please e-mail us again and we'll help you out. As to your question, "Who really knows if I'm doing the right thing?" God always knows if you're doing the right thing. Amen.*

*May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Bubbie*

*Dear Bubbie,*

*Yesterday I was walking down Main Street when an angel caught my eye. There was a display of the cutest little stained glass angel in one of the windows. I started thinking about how nice an angel would look in my window, so I walked inside and bought one. Well it really does look great in my window, especially the way it catches the light and reflects it back through the wings, so when my cousin Bessie came over to play Mah Jongg, I took her over to the window so that she could take a look. Well, she took one look and yelled, "What's with the angel? We're Jewish, we don't believe in angels!!!" So, nu Bubbie, do we or don't we? I don't have to get rid of my angel, do I?*

Sincerely, Clair Ence

*Dear Claire,*

*Oy, talk about angels, take a look at this picture of our new granddaughter...such a shayna punim, such a little angel. Now as to your question. Of course, we believe in angels. Does this mean that the angels that we believe in, look like the angel in your window? Maybe yes, maybe no, we really don't know; although, rabbinic literature, especially midrashim, are filled with descriptions of angels. What purpose do angels serve? As the Encyclopedia Judaica tells us "many Biblical writers assume the existence of beings superior to man in knowledge and power, but subordinate to (and apparently creatures of) the one God. These beings serve as His attendants, like courtiers of an earthly king, and also as His agents to convey His messages to men and carry out His will. If you remember your Torah, and I'm sure you do, you will remember that Abram and Sarai were visited by angels and that Jacob wrestled with one. By the way, here is my favorite angel story and very appropriate as we look forward to the month of Elul.*

*May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Bubbie*

#### **An Angel's Teshuvah**

*An angel once disobeyed God. When she was brought before the throne of judgement, she begged for forgiveness. "Give me a chance to do teshuvah," she pleaded. "Your teshuvah," the Holy One announced, "will be to return to earth to find the most precious thing in the world and bring it back to Me."*

*For three years, the angel patiently roamed the earth. Finally on a battlefield, she heard a dying soldier call out for water. Then she saw his wounded friend crawl to him to give him a drink from his canteen. When the last drop of water touched his parched lips, the angel seized the canteen and brought it to the Holy One.*

*God said to the angel, "This is very precious but it is not the most precious thing in the world."*

*The angel returned to earth and roamed the world for another three years until she came to a hospital where a doctor lay dying of a disease she had gotten caring for a patient. The angel caught her last breath and brought it to the Holy One.*

*Again God said to the angel, "This is very precious but it is not the most precious thing in the world."*

*The angel returned to earth to continue the search. Suddenly, she saw a mean looking man holding a sword. He was walking to the house of his enemy to kill him. A light was on in the house so the man peered inside. He saw his enemy's wife putting her little son to sleep. She was teaching him to say the bedtime prayers. As he watched them, the man's heart melted. He remembered how his own mother had cared for him and taught him these same prayers.*

*When a tear fell from his eyes, the angel caught it and flew directly to the Holy One. God smiled and spoke, "Indeed, this is the most precious thing in the world. Teshuvah opens the gates of heaven."*

Dear Zaydee,

Where do I sign up for the aerobics class held during the Torah service? With all this jumping up and down and spinning around, I could get quite a workout.

Sincerely, Exercise Is My Religion

*Dear Mr. Religion,*

*No need to struggle into that leotard, dear. This is all a normal part of the Torah service. From the moment the ark is opened and until the Torah is returned to it, we must be on our very best behavior to show our respect for the Torah. So, you want to stand from the time the Torah is removed from the ark until it is placed on the reader's table, avoiding all unnecessary conversation, (this includes critiquing the latest synagogue fashions) and never turning your back on the Torah. This means that when the Torah takes a stroll, it is very respectful to turn and face the Torah as it goes up the aisle, around the back and down the next aisle. You might wonder why the Torah goes for a stroll around the sanctuary. I'm so glad you wondered. The Torah likes to be greeted and kissed by as many people as possible, so it goes out to work the crowd.*

*Just remember this simple rule: When the Torah stands up, you stand up; when the Torah sits down, you sit down. May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Zaydee*

Dear Bubbie,

I'm shocked!!! In the middle of services, everyone did a dance called the "tush push" at the beginning and again at the end of a very long prayer. Isn't this type of behavior more appropriate at a Bar Mitzvah party?

Sincerely, I Brake for Simchas

*Dear Ms. Simcha,*

*Nothing like a good line dance at a Bar Mitzvah to shake up the old bones. I can remember my grandson Shmulik's party, attended by no less than...I'm sorry for the digression. Back to your question: I'm sure that you are referring to the Amidah which has a lovely choreography all its own. You begin by taking three steps forward as you "approach" God in the Amidah. We do this because Moses advanced through three levels of holiness as he went up to Sinai. Sometimes due to space constraints, you have to take three steps back before you can take three steps forward. At the end of the Amidah, there is the special choreography that goes along with it.*

*Begin by bowing and taking three steps back. Bow left and say...Oseh shalom bimromav - Bow right and say...Hu ya'aseh shalom - bow forward and say Aleinu v'al kol Yisrael, v'imru amen.. Next week, I'll help you dance through the rest of the Amidah.*

*May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Bubbie*

Dear Bubbie & Zaydee,

Yesterday, I went to services at Beth "P'tuchim B'Yamim Noraim." When I walked in somebody told me to cover my head. On a table I found some beanies and a stack of cake doilies. Assuming that the doilies would be used for refreshments, I put a beanie on my head. After walking into the sanctuary I noticed all kinds of head coverings (By the way, those doilies weren't for cakes.). I'll admit it's been a really, really, really long time since I've been to synagogue and I've even forgotten what you call those beanies, but it got me thinking why do we cover our heads anyway?

Sincerely, I Want Cake on My Doilies

*Dear Mr. Doilie,*

*Different religions have different symbols of respect. A Christian removes his hat for prayer. A Moslem covers his head and removes his shoes. At one time Jews removed their shoes and covered their heads during worship. We learn the custom of removing shoes when entering a holy place from Exodus 3:5 when Moses spots the burning bush and is told, "Do not come closer. Remove your sandals from your feet for the place on which you stand is holy." In many Middle-Eastern Jewish traditions, this barefooted tradition continues today. In the West, barefooted prayer is reserved for special occasions such as Yom Kippur and as a sign of mourning.*

*Oy, as usual I got distracted, Bubbie dear... You take it from here.*

*Yes, Zaydee dear. Now, back to the beanie question: The beanie you covered your head with is called a yarmulke in Yiddish and a kippah in Hebrew. Those cake doilies are used by women, although now more and more women are wearing kipot too.*

*Covering our heads during prayer and when we're in the synagogue has become our custom; however, we're not really sure why. Let's look at a few historical examples. In the Torah, we learn that part of the clothing for the priests included head coverings for dignity and adornment. In the Talmud (Kid.33a) we read, "Rabina was sitting before R. Jeremiah of Difti, when a certain man passed by without covering his head as a sign of respect. 'How impudent is that man!'" he exclaimed. In his "Guide for the Perplexed" Maimonides says, "The great men among our Sages would not uncover their heads. They believed that God's glory was round them and over them."*

*While head coverings were obviously considered a sign of respect, they were not initially seen as a requirement. However as time passed, praying with an uncovered head became a part of Church etiquette. So to worship with your head uncovered was regarded as a imitation of the Christians.*

*As Abraham Milgram, the author of Jewish Worship says, "In modern times the head covering is an indispensable part of the Jew's attire at worship." It is quite unthinkable for anyone to enter an Orthodox or Conservative synagogue, let alone participate in the worship, with an uncovered head. So, Bubbelah, each time you enter the synagogue to pray or to attend a meeting, cover your head.*

*May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Bubbie & Zaydee*

Dear Bubbie,

This morning, I picked up my grandchildren from Religious School. As usual they told me about their lessons. I was shocked! You can't believe the language a teacher used. During shacharit (morning prayers) the shaliach tzibur (the leader), encouraged the students to gather the corners of the tallit together. A teacher referred to the fringes of the tallit using a slang term for a part of the human anatomy. From one Bubbie to another, what is this world coming to? It's not like the good old days when such filth would never be said out loud, let alone at the synagogue.

Sincerely, I Should Be Kvelling But I'm Kvetching

Dear Ms. Kvetch,

*Stop kvetching. The teacher said tzitzit not "censored." The tzitzit are the fringes on the tallit. In Num. 15:37-41 "The Lord said to Moses: Speak to the people and instruct them to make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments throughout the ages... Thus you shall be reminded to observe all My commandments and to be holy to your God."*

*How do the fringes of the tallit remind us of God's commandments? The numerical value of the word tzitzit is 600 (A little gematria is good for everyone.). Each fringe is made of eight strings and five knots. This totals 613 (Don't take off your shoes, I'll do the math for you.):  $600+8+5=613$ .*

*According to the Midrash, when we wrap ourselves in the tallit, we strengthen our kavannah during prayer. As Rabbi Hezekiah taught, "When B'nai Yisrael are wrapped in their prayer shawls, let them feel as though the glory of the Divine Presence were upon them." So wrap your grandchildren in their tallitot and start kvelling. May you continue to bring much nachas to your children, Bubbie*

Dear Bubbie,

Can you believe it? Our Rabbi was so light-headed after fasting on Yom Kippur, that he forgot to say the blessing over the spices. Do you think it's okay to run up to the bimah and remind him if he forgets next year?

Sincerely, S. P. Ices

Dear S. P.,

*The blessing over spices is only recited on the conclusion of Shabbat as a symbol of our sadness over the ending of Shabbat. Our tradition holds that because of the extra rest and food that we enjoy on Shabbat, we are given an "extra soul" on Shabbat. At Havdalah, to fortify ourselves when this "extra soul" departs, we sniff spices to maintain our strength.*

*At the conclusion of Yom Kippur, because it is a day of fasting and "afflicting our soul," there is no reason to bless spices because we have not enjoyed extra pleasures on Yom Kippur.  
May you continue to bring much nachas to your children, Bubbie*

Dear Zaydee,

I went to my local grocery store to purchase some Havdalah Spices but they didn't have any. So, then I went to that big new superstore on the other side of town and they didn't have any either. I've looked everywhere and I can't find a single container of Havdalah Spice. Can it be special ordered over the internet?

Sincerely, Pepper Korn

*Dear Pepper,*

*Just about any pleasantly fragrant spice can be used for Havdalah. Many people use cloves or cinnamon.  
May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Zaydee*

Dear Bubbie,

Last week we attended our congregation's "Surfin' Through Shabbat" program and decided that we would like to make Havdalah every week. So, I sent my son to the store to buy a Havdalah candle and he returned with something that scares me. It must have at least ten wicks. Is this a special Havdalah candle for outdoors? I'm afraid to light it! I could set the house on fire! How many wicks do I need anyway?

Sincerely, Bonnie Fier

*Dear Bonnie,*

*The blessing on the Havdalah candle each Saturday night is "borei m'orei haesh" praising God who created "the lights of fire." In order to guarantee that the blessing is not said in vain - there are always more than one. While ten seems a little excessive, I have seen candles with up to seven wicks - to represent the Shabbat and the six days of the week.*

*May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Bubbie*

Dear Bubbie,

I overheard some friends talking about the big "Kiddush" at the synagogue, so assuming that they were having some special event for kids, I gathered up my kids and off we went. We joined the services and any minute we're expecting them to announce the big event. So, imagine our disappointment when they announce this "Kiddush." What happens? The Hazzan says a long prayer and drinks a cup of something all by herself. I didn't see anything special for the kids. We're never going back!

Sincerely, Manny Shevitz

*Dear Manny,*

*Oy va voy...Have I got some explaining to do! The word "Kiddush" means sanctification. Making Kiddush over the wine (i.e. sanctifying the wine) is done in order to fulfill the Biblical commandment to "remember the Shabbat and keep it holy." The recitation of Kiddush during Friday evening services is an old tradition. In very poor communities, many people were unable to afford wine to make Kiddush at home, so it was said in the synagogue for their benefit.  
May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Bubbie*

Dear Bubbie,

My cousin, Shloimie, told me not to forget to cover the challah before making Kiddush, otherwise it will be embarrassed. I laughed and said yeah, right! He said Yeah, right, that's why we cover the challah. He's always joking around, but about this he seemed serious. Is he?

Sincerely, Kay Ver

*Dear Kay*

*Shloimie is right. Kiddush means sanctification and what we are sanctifying is the day of Shabbat, not the wine. So out of deference to the poor, the rabbis declared that Kiddush could be recited over the bread. So now the challah expects to have Kiddush recited over it. But what it can't see doesn't hurt it. So, if we cover the challah, it won't know what's going on.*

*May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Bubbie*

Dear Bubbie,

Oy, am I in big trouble! I'm a member of the education committee and I volunteered to pick up some dreidels for the Religious School. When I got home, I noticed that some of the dreidels were messed up. Where there should be a shin, there's a pey. Well I don't have enough time to go back to the Judaica store (It's all the way down in the city.) before school starts, so I thought I would correct the dreidels myself. So, my question Bubbie, is this: What kind of paint works best on plastic dreidels?

Sincerely, Nessa Gadol

*Dear Nessa,*

*You can put down your paintbrush. You really don't have a mistake there. You simply have dreidels which were made for sale in Israel, but not for sale outside of Israel. Dreidels made for sale outside of Israel have the four Hebrew letters, nun, gimel, hey and shin which stands for the phrase "nes gadol hiya sham" which means "a great miracle happened there." Which makes sense since the miracle took place over there, not here. Dreidels made for sale inside Israel, have the four Hebrew letters, nun, gimel, hey and pey which stands for the phrase "nes gadol hiya po" which means "a great miracle happened here."*

*So, no need to get out the paint brushes, just explain the difference and pass out the dreidels. Whether it's a shin or a pey, they all spin the same.*

*May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Bubbie*

Dear Zaydee,

Last night I went to my friend Jenna's Bat Mitzvah party. The food was pretty good and I had a lot of fun, but something kind of strange took place. There were two candle lighting ceremonies! I go to lots of Bar and Bat Mitzvah parties, so I've seen lots of candle lighting ceremonies like the second one, but not like the first one. I was too far back in the room to really see or hear what was going on, but it seems as though there was some sort of chanting or singing going on after they lit the candles. Anyway, the really strange part is that they only lit four candles and there was room for five more on the candelabra. So, my question, Zaydee, is: Why didn't they use the rest of the candles? It seemed kind of odd for it to be half empty.

Sincerely, Hannah Chah

*Dear Hannah,*

*Hmmm, it seems to me that when Jenna lit candles for the first ceremony, she was celebrating the festival of Hanukkah. On Hanukkah, we celebrate, among other things, the miracle of the oil keeping the ner tamid burning in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem for eight days, which was seven days more than the Maccabees expected. So, the candelabra or, to call it by its proper name, the hanukkiah, has room for nine candles. One for the shamash (the candle used to light the other candles) and eight more, one for each night of Hanukkah. Following the tradition of Rabbi Hillel, we light one candle on the first night, two candles on the second night and so on until we light all eight candles on the eighth night. So, this tells us that Jenna's Bat Mitzvah party was held on the third night of Hanukkah.*

*May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Zaydee*

Dear Bubbie,

I am going to Wisconsin next week to spend part of Hanukkah getting to know my fiancée's family. My future father-in-law asked me to bring some of my favorite Hanukkah cheese recipes to share with the family. I laughed because I thought he was making some kind of Wisconsin "cheese" joke (I hope I don't have to wear one of those cheese head hats during the visit) but he didn't laugh. He was serious. My family usually makes latkes or buy sufganiot for Hanukkah. Who eats cheese to celebrate Hanukkah?

Sincerely, Mel Wahkee

*Dear Mel,*

*Believe it or not, the custom of eating cheese on Hanukkah is an ancient custom which is still practiced in a few homes today. In the book of Judith, we read that the governor promulgated a rather evil decree, to which Judith, the daughter of the High Priest, took exception. So, she fed the governor cheese, then wine to quench his thirst. When he fell asleep, she beheaded him. So, to help you out, I am sending you a copy of my favorite cheesecake recipe.*

*May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Bubbie*

Dear Zaydee,

My son came home from the Vilda Chaya Nursery School singing a song that goes something like, “my oats sure and you’re a T”. I can’t even begin to tell you the words he uses for the rest of the song. Anyway, he insists that it’s a Hanukkah song and wants to sing it when we light the candles. The tune sounds vaguely familiar, like a song about a rock I once learned at Hebrew School. But the words he’s singing, I can assure you, have nothing to do with Hanukkah.

Sincerely, Rock Avayges

*Dear Rock,*

*Perhaps your son is singing his very own special version of Ma’oz Tzur, also known in English as “Rock of Ages,” composed in the thirteenth century by a man named Mordechai. After the proper number of lights are kindled each night, we sing Ma’oz Tzur. Although the verses note the various exiles from Eretz Yisroel that our ancestors endured, the song has always been exclusively sung at Hanukkah. By the way, how do I know that the name of the author is Mordechai? Take a look at the first Hebrew letter of the first five stanza. What does it spell? Mordechai. May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Zaydee*

Dear Zaydee,

My question is short and to the point. Who is “Aynu” and why do we want him or her to die at the seder?

Sincerely A. Lou Hotzi

*Dear Lou,*

*Could it be that you’re thinking of the song “Dayyenu?” Dayyenu means “It would have been enough.” We begin by singing “If He (God) had only taken us out of Egypt, that would have been enough.” and then we continue to sing of nine more times when God performed acts of kindness for us. Dayyenu is always our favorite song to sing around the seder table.*

*May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Zaydee*

Dear Bubbie,

We are new to this whole Passover thing and we really want to do things right. We recently learned that “seder” means “order,” but we don’t know what we’re supposed to order or who we’re supposed to order from. Could you help us out with this one?

Sincerely Hal Lall

*Dear Hal,*

*You are correct that “seder” means “order” but it does not mean ordering out! What it refers to is the specific order in which we do things at the two special Pesach meals. Since we’re so concerned with the “seder” of things at those meals, they come to be known as seders. And to get you started, here is a rundown of the seder. 1. Kadesh, 2. Urchatz. 3. Karpas, 4. Yachatz, 5. Maggid, 6. Rotzah, 7. Motzi, 8. Matzah, 9. Maror, 10. Korekh, 11. Shulchan Orekh. 12. Tzafun, 13. Barekh, 14. Hallel, 15. Nirtzah.*

*May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Bubbie*

Dear Zaydee,

We noticed an advertisement in the back of our Haggadah for a trip to Jerusalem next year, but we couldn’t find a phone number to request more information. Maybe it was in your Haggadah, too? It had a very catchy phrase “Next year in Jerusalem,” but that was it. My family is interested in visiting Jerusalem and we are hoping that your Haggadah had more details.

Sincerely, L. Shana Habah

*Dear Shana,*

*Pesach is one of the “shalosh regalim” (Pilgrimage festivals) when Jews are obligated to go up to Jerusalem and make a sacrifice at the Holy Temple. Even though the Temple in Jerusalem no longer stands, and we no longer make sacrifices, we still want to express our desire to return to Zion, to Jerusalem. So we conclude our seder by asking God to redeem us and bring us to the holy land. We do this by reciting “Next year in Jerusalem” as Jew have done for centuries.*

*May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Zaydee*



Dear Bubbie,

I went to my very first seder and I couldn't believe it! Everybody was leaning and nearly falling off their chairs and this was before we even drank the first cup of wine. So, I'm assuming they had a big cocktail party before the seder started, but I wasn't invited. Why would they insult me like this?

Sincerely, Perry Hagafen

*Dear Perry,*

*Sitting and leaning to the left during the seder is one of the acts we do to symbolize freedom. This custom started during Roman times. Why do we lean to the left and not to the right, you might ask? To make sure that everyone leaves the seder alive. It was believed that a person leaning to the left, as opposed to the right, was less likely to choke on wine or food.*

*May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Bubbie*

Dear Zaydee,

I need some shopping advice. I went to the store the other day and found regular matzah, shmura matzah, egg matzah, whole wheat matzah, matzah made in Israel, matzah made in Brooklyn, and matzah dipped in chocolate, but no Afikomen matzah. I clearly remember having an afikomen matzah at my friend's seder last year. Now it's my turn to host the seder for our family and I need the afikomen type of matzah. So Zaydee where do you get yours?

Sincerely, Avi Coemen

*Dear Avi,*

*Your regular kosher for Pesach matzah will do. "Afikomen" is the name given to the larger half removed when breaking the middle matzah. Where does the word afikomen come from? Well, there is some scholarly thought that it comes from the Greek word "epikomen." Epikomen were wild parties held in honor of Bacchus, the god of wine. It has also been suggested that it means "after meal entertainment." The afikomen is meant to symbolize the paschal lamb after which nothing more could be eaten. So, eating your "kezayit" (an amount about the size of an olive) is the last entertainment you'll have for the evening unless Uncle Irv insists on telling those same old after dinner jokes again.*

*May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Zaydee*

Dear Zaydee,

What in the world is an "ushpizin" and why in the world would I want to have one in my Sukkah?

Sincerely, Sue Kah

*Dear Sue,*

*The Ushpizin are honorary guests whom we invite to our Sukkah. Traditionally we invite Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron and David. Today we also invite Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, Rachel, Miriam, Deborah and Judith to join us in the Sukkah.*

*May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Zaydee.*

Dear Bubbie,

What are the four species? I think the first is animal, the second vegetable, and the third mineral, but nobody knows the fourth. What is it?

Sincerely, Myrtle N. Willow

*Dear Myrtle,*

*The fourth species or "arba minim" is the lulav and the etrog. In Leviticus 23:40 we read: "On the first day, you shall take the product of goodly trees, branches of the palm trees, boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, seven days." The Rabbis have interpreted this to mean the etrog, palm, myrtle and willow.*

*May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Bubbie*

Dear Zaydee,

My mom told my dad to get some scotch for our Sukkah. Why do we need scotch? Don't we make Kiddush over wine?

Sincerely, Manny Shevitz

*Dear Manny,*

*I believe your mom was asking for "skakh" not "scotch." Skakh is the roof of your sukkah and it is a very important part. It must be organic which means something grown. Generally, branches are used. You need enough skakh so that the sukkah is mostly shaded in the sun, but not so much that you can't see the stars at night. You will be sleeping in your sukkah, won't you?*

*May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Zaydee*

Dear Zaydee,

What's a person to do?!?!? My neighbors are at it again! Last year they built an outhouse in their backyard... Can you believe it? Such an eyesore! I complained and after about a week they took it down. But the nerve, they put it up again this year. Not only that, but they've invited my children to use it too! Thank God, we have indoor plumbing. This time I'm calling city hall. But my question, Zaydee, is how can I get them to stop this nonsense every year?

Sincerely, Sue Coat

*Dear Sue,*

*Don't stop 'em, join 'em! Calm down and get ready to do, not only the greatest arts and crafts project in the whole world, but one which you and your family will enjoy for years and years and years to come.*

*Your neighbors are building a sukkah to celebrate the holiday of Sukkot. So here are some tips for building your own sukkah: The size is determined by the amount of space you have available, although you will want to build the biggest one you can. In terms of prices, there's also a wide range depending on size and how much sweat equity you want to put into the project. One rule of thumb is to build/buy the biggest one you can.*

*May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Zaydee*

Dear Zaydee,

Has our catering chairwoman lost her mind? We just finished renovating the meat and dairy kitchens at our synagogue and we're getting ready to use them for the first time. The dairy kitchen will be first and we're going to have a special Kiddush. I volunteered myself, my wife and our best friends to cook for the special Kiddush. So we all met in the dairy kitchen on Thursday evening and got right to work. The chairwoman of the catering committee walks in, and tells us that we have to stop our preparations and wait for the mashiach to arrive.

Wait until the mashiach arrives! Has she lost her mind? She insisted that we had to wait. We insisted that she was being ridiculous. One thing led to another and, to make a long story short, the herring ended up on the floor and we walked out. Zaydee, what does waiting for the Messiah have to do with cooking in the synagogue kitchen?

Sincerely, Eli Hanavi

*Dear Eli,*

*I think the chairwoman wanted you to wait for the "mashgiach" not the "mashiach." The addition of a "gimel" or a "g" makes all the difference in the world. As you already know "mashiach" is the Hebrew word we use for the English word messiah. Some think that the messiah is responsible for saving us. Saving us from what or from whom, we're not sure, but that's an answer for a different question. A "mashgiach," on the other hand, is responsible for saving us from eating treif (non-kosher food). A mashgiach must be well-versed in all aspects of kashrut, from knowing which products need kosher certification and which do not, to which kosher product certifications are acceptable and which are not, to which appliances, dishes and utensils can be kashered, and which cannot and much more. As you can see, the work of the mashgiach goes far beyond keeping that slice of cheese off of our hamburger.*

*May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Zaydee*

Dear Bubbie,

Last month, my cousin, Tzipie Shaindel, and I drove from St. Louis to Memphis. As we were driving on the highway, we needed to use the restroom. The restroom nearest to the exit just happened to be located in a McDonald's Restaurant. Tzipie refused to go in because of Morris Iyin. I didn't see anyone who looked like a "Morris" near the entrance. Perhaps a Bubba or Jim Bob, but no "Morris." She was so insistent about this "Morris" fellow that I got back in the car and got back on the highway as quickly as I could. Thank God, there was a rest stop five miles down the road.

So Bubbie, do you think I should say something to my aunt (Tzippie's mother)? Perhaps together we can encourage her to seek counseling. She shouldn't have to spend the rest of her life running away from this imaginary man.

Sincerely, Annie Loyodat

*Dear Annie,*

*I think your cousin, Tzippie Shaindel, was worried about "maris ayin" not a man named "Morris Iyin." In Judaism there is a concept called "maris ayin which can also be pronounced "ma'arit ayin." What this means is that someone should refrain from doing something which is permissible, but could be misconstrued as being forbidden. For example, although it is certainly permissible to serve pareve margarine at a meat meal, many people will place the margarine in its original wrapper on the table so that everyone will see that it is not dairy. Otherwise someone might mistake it for dairy and following the example set by the host, set out butter at a meat meal, thereby unwittingly, and violate the laws of kashrut.*

*So, your cousin was worried that by going into McDonalds to use the restroom, which is certainly permissible, she would be violating the concept of maris ayin, because someone might think that the McDonalds is kosher and that they can eat there. BTW there are kosher McDonalds, just not in the United States. May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Bubbie*

Dear Bubbie & Zaydee,

At the end of every letter you write: "May you continue to bring nachos to your family." I'm confused: Why do I have to bring Mexican snacks to my family? Is that a new Jewish custom that I never learned about in Hebrew School? And why do I have to bring "nachos" to my family? Can I bring them fajitas or tacos instead? Can I substitute Chinese food? And what does "nachos" have to do with all the wonderful rituals and symbols of Judaism? Please Bubbe and Zayde, help me to understand this!!

Sincerely Amy Haaretz

*Dear Amy,*

*Oy Bubbeleh, that's "nachEs", not "nachOs." As we learn in The Joys of Yiddish, by Leo Rosten, nachas comes from the Hebrew word nachat, contentment, and can be defined in several ways: 1. Proud pleasure, special joy, particularly from the achievements of a child. Jews use nachas to describe the glow of pleasure-plus-pride that only a child can give to its parents: "I have such nachas: My son was voted president of his play group." "Are you shepping (getting) nachas from your daughter's career?" 2. Psychological reward or gratification. "I am getting nachas from writing this book, since a new book is indeed a brainchild.*

*Now nachas always gives you something to kvell about. Oy now you want us to explain kvell. That will have to wait for next month's column.*

*May you continue to bring much nachas and a little Chinese food to your family, Zaydee*

Dear Bubbie,

My son came home from Religious School and told me that they are going to celebrate two bishvats. What's a "bishvat?" Why do we celebrate two of them?

Sincerely, E. Lanote

*Dear E.,*

*Tu B'Shevat is the New Year of the Trees, so we celebrate by planting trees, and eating fruits and nuts which are grown in Israel. The Hebrew words Tu B'Shevat literally mean "the fifteenth (day) of (the month of) Shevat." The Hebrew letter tet is nine; the Hebrew letter vav equals six. Hence tet/vav makes the number fifteen. Keep reading for more Tu B'Shevat questions and answers.*

*May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Bubbie*

Dear Zaydee,

This evening, after her KADIMA meeting, my daughter told me that her advisor said that the class was going to have a "tube of vat" seder. Zaydee, I know all about the Pesach seder, but what is a "tube of vat" seder? By the way I looked for a tube of "vat" at the supermarket (I figured it would come with instructions.) and couldn't find any. Should I try CVS?

Sincerely, Annie Loyodat

Dear Annie,

*Hmm, it sounds to me like you are probably talking about a "Tu B'Shevat" seder. Over 400 years ago in the Israeli city of Zefat, Kabbalists (mystics) began this beautiful custom of observing the holiday of Tu B'Shevat with a special ritualized meal which became known as the Tu B'Shevat seder. This seder includes four cups of wine or grape juice going from white to red, eating foods associated with Israel such as figs, dates, wheat, grapes, pomegranates, almonds, and carob, and songs and readings that reflect the themes of nature, ecology, and the land of Israel. In the last 10 or 15 years, the seder has been revitalized and many Jews have added it to their yearly observances. May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Zaydee*

Dear Zaydee,

My class is planning a Tu B'Shevat seder and everyone was assigned to bring something. I was told to bring the "boxer." I don't get it. Why do we need a boxer at the seder? Anyway, I don't know any boxers, but my brother knows karate so do you think I can bring him instead? I know that some of our ozrim wrestle in high school, so I could bring a wrestler. Zaydee what should I do? I don't even understand why we have to have a fight at a Tu B'Shevat seder.

Sincerely, Kay Rob

Dear Kay,

*Oy va voy!!! "Bokser," not "boxer," also known as St. John's bread, is probably best known as carob. Carob or bokser is grown in Israel and it became particularly popular amongst Jews living in the diaspora (outside of the Land of Israel) who wanted to eat fruits grown in the Holy Land. During the olden days only well-to-do people could afford to purchase dried dates and figs from Israel, but everyone could afford to buy bokser. May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Zaydee*

Dear Zaydee,

My son just got home from pre-school and told me that he's going to make New Year cards for all the trees in our backyard. I never heard of such a thing. What are they going to tell us to do next? Make birthday cards for each blade of grass?

Sincerely, Ilan Oat

Dear Ilan,

*Guess what! There are four Jewish New Years. We all know about Rosh Hashanah on the first of Tishrei. Some of us might know (but probably not) that the first of Elul is the new year for the tithing of animals. Some of us might know (but probably not) that the first of Nisan is the New Year for kings and for the Pilgrimage festivals. According to Hillel, the fifteenth of Shevat is the New Year of the Trees.*

*In Israel, Tu B'Shevat is observed by planting seedlings in honor of the New Year of the Trees. In the Diaspora, many Jews participate in the mitzvah of planting trees by contributing money to the Jewish National Fund (JNF). May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Zaydee*

Dear Bubbie, My Aunt Sorelah Rivkalah planted a tree in Israel in honor of my birthday. Well, she didn't exactly plant the tree herself, but I think she sent some money to someone in Israel and they planted it for her. The problem is that I don't know when I'll be going to Israel, so I'd appreciate it if you could give me the name of someone I can ask to water my tree. I'd hate to have it shrivel up in the desert.

Sincerely, Jayne Eff

Dear Jayne,

*No need to worry, the JEWISH NATIONAL FUND takes care of everything for you. They plant, they water, they prune, they nurture. This is a very special way to show your support for the State of Israel. By the way, Zaydee and I recently attended the Bat Mitzvah of our favorite niece and were very pleasantly surprised to discover that she had planted a tree in honor of us to celebrate her Bat Mitzvah. Oy, such a wonderful thing to do. She always brings so much nachas to us.*

*May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Bubbie*

Dear Bubbie

Oy va voy, I can't believe my ears! At Temple Beth El, I heard one of the students address her teacher as "moron." How disrespectful! And if that wasn't enough the teacher didn't blink an eye! Have our teachers become so used to this type of behavior that it doesn't even register? I was horrified by such a lack of respect for our teachers. So, nu Bubbie, tell me how I can stop this name-calling.

Sincerely, Dara Cheretz

*Dear Dara,*

*Oy va voy back to you. You shouldn't believe your ears! I'm sure that the student called the teacher "morah," not "moron." The Hebrew word for teacher is morah and the student was using it as a sign of respect.*

*We read in the Mishnah, that we learn from these words in Devarim, "and you shall teach them diligently unto to children," that parents have a legal obligation to teach their children. The great commentator, Rashi expands on this saying that in this verse children refers to one's students. The Torah indicates that the relationship between teacher and student is like that of parent and child. Someone once said that a parent is one who gives his child physical life. A Torah teacher gives his student spiritual life.*

*At TBE your children have had the privilege of learning with an exceptional teaching staff. A staff which is committed to developing the whole Jewish child. They are morim (plural of morah) of the highest level. May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Bubbie.*

Dear Bubbie & Zaydee,

I simply do not understand why they are letting "these people" advise the Religious School at my new synagogue! Let me explain. At my old synagogue, Rak Petuchim B'Yamim Noraim, we had a school committee and they helped with things at the school. At my new synagogue, Temple Beth El, they have people who are "Bored of Education." Are these the kind of people who should be setting policy for the school? I don't think so. We need creative and thoughtful people who are "excited," not "bored" about education. I know you can't do anything about this, but thanks for letting me get this off my chest!

Sincerely, Annie Lomaveena

*Dear Annie,*

*Calm down. That's Board, not Bored, of Education. We know from our many conversations with Barb that she never thought that they were bored or boring. As the Director of the school, she found them to not only be creative and thoughtful, but incredibly supportive of the Religious School and its programs. Throughout the past six years, this special group has covered the outside of the synagogue in butcher paper, cut innumerable lengths of string and small pieces of paper and they have carried hundreds of pounds of sand, twisted wire, filled tiny bags with flour, salt, sugar, and baking powder, baked baklava for five hundred and made honey ice cream and apple ice-cream to eat with bees. And they still found time to tackle some of the weightier issues regarding the religious education of the students.*

*We're sure that Barb would like to join us in thanking those who have served on the Board of Education. Perhaps you should give some thought to joining this illustrious group. May you continue to bring much nachas to your family, Bubbie.*