

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

Both considerations offered by Aron Pinker ("Letters to the Editor", JBQ XXXII:4) as to the reason for the custom of starting the Shabbat Kiddush with the two words: *yom hashishi* are quite cogent. However, it is doubtful that they played a role in the origin of the custom. Both Pinker and Saul Leeman ("The Names of God", JBQ XXXII:2) misstate the problem of characterizing the attaching of the words *yom hashishi* to the Kiddush as "entirely out of place" and as "forcing the Masoretic text."

As Leeman acknowledges, the words *yom hashishi*, which are the last words of Genesis 1:31 immediately precede the opening words of the Kiddush, *vayechulu hashamayim* (the first words of Genesis 2:1) so that strictly speaking they are not "out of place." Moreover, there is a venerable tradition which holds that sheer textual proximity in the Torah [*s'muchim*] may be explored for all sorts of significance regardless of grammatical or other considerations to the contrary.

Actually what made the custom problematic was the rule that in citing Torah texts one should not quote fragments of verses but always the entire verse in order to safeguard the integrity of the Masoretic versification scheme. Therefore, some added the words *vayhi erev vayehi voker, yom hashishi*. . . . While less abrupt than mere *yom hashishi* it was still not the complete verse of Genesis 1:31. Thus, in one of his responses, Rabbi Moshe Sofer (1763-1839) known as the Chatam Sofer suggests that the entire of Genesis 1:31 be recited before the Kiddush which he claims was the original custom. This not only satisfies the Halacha but is a beautiful introduction and even justification for observing the Shabbat. God has given us a completed cosmos which He has pronounced *very good*. Let us celebrate it in joy and thus testify that it is indeed *very good*.

Shubert Spero
Jerusalem

Sir,

Once again, I write to compliment you and your staff on the quality, variety and creativity of your journal. I was especially impressed by Irving Wefeld's essay on Exodus 23:19 "*You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk*" (JBQ XXXII:2, 2004). I found Wefeld's conclusion rich and exciting. It occurs to

me that his idea concentrating on the root meaning of the word *kadosh* plays well with the predicate upon which the beginning of the Book of Genesis is based. God repeats the idea of distinction in Genesis 1 separating water from dry land and distinguishing day from night in Genesis 1. Indeed, the service that concludes Shabbat the holy from weekdays the profane, is indicated by the same verb/noun *l'havdil/havdalah*.

Israel Stein
Bridgeport CT