

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

The article "The Mystery, Meaning and Disappearance of the Tekhelet" (Vol. XXXIX:2, April-June, 2011) reflects the mind set of those persons educated in the literacy of the Talmud. The authors of that article apparently held that the Talmud provides an appropriate answer to most questions. A direct answer is often avoided by including a reference to mysticism and irrelevant stories. Some years ago I noticed that the required "thread of blue" was missing on the authorized Tallith. I searched available literature and learned that a long standing declaration held that only a specific form of blue dye was permissible. Such a dye would be obtainable from a sea born snail. Over the centuries many gifted persons tried to devise an acceptable formula or process for making such a dye. Rav Gershon Henoch of Radzin devoted his life experimenting with different formulas. The word tekhelet means blue. Blue is specified for a number of cloth items including the garments of the priest, cloth covers for the Tabernacle, etc. It is a very commonly available color. The problem arose when the demand rose for that special dye from a sea snail. The cost was beyond the reach of most people. A mitzvah must be available to all desiring its use. Thus, a declaration from a priestly authority that **white** is permissible for the required "thread of blue." That declaration was contrary to the specific language of the written Torah. See my paper "The Missing Thread of Blue", *Jewish Bible Quarterly* XXXI (4):245.

Herbert Block

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Sir,

There was a recent article in the *JBQ* "The Pharaohs Who Knew Moses" (Vol. XXXIX:1, January-March 2011) which was well-written. But how could the author fail to include Ramesses II as a Pharaoh who knew Moses? Consider the time factor. Moses left Egypt to avoid punishment by the ruling Pharaoh for killing a fellow human being. He fled to Midian knowing of the established practice that a new Pharaoh would release all criminals from punishment. Moses waited forty years for Ramesses II to die, and be replaced. Just before the incident of the "Burning Bush" there is this sentence: *And it came to pass in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died*

(Ex. 11:23). Moses could now return to Egypt knowing that a new Pharaoh would pardon him and all other persons pending punishment for committed crimes. Ramesses II managed to live a long life and Moses waited 40 years. Ramesses II was the Pharaoh from 1279-1213. Moses was eighty years old when he left Midian. If we subtract 80 years from 1213 we get 1293. At that time, Ramesses was the Pharaoh for 14 years when his daughter brought home the infant Moses. Prior to becoming the Pharaoh, Ramesses was about 20 years old. Ramesses and Moses knew each other well. Ramesses undertook an extra large building project in the Nile Delta, Goshen area. He knew of the Israelite people among the non-Egyptians living in the area. Moses left Midian and returned to Egypt. The Pharaoh at that time was Ramesses son Merenptah, 1213-1203. Merenptah most likely was the Pharaoh of the Exodus. My data is taken from *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, 2003 edition and *Israel In Egypt* by James K. Hoffmeier, 1996.

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I want to thank Judy Taubes Sterman for the wonderful article "Themes in the Deborah Narrative" (Vol. XXXIX:1, January-March 2011). I thoroughly enjoyed reading her analysis, and found her arguments thoughtful and compelling. As she wrote on p. 23 these mothers shed their original identity and take "on an uncharacteristic, assertive, decidedly non-feminine one, instead." The contrast of the three mothers was a delight to read. Well done. There is an interesting, slight link between her article and the one that I authored on Genesis 27 in the same issue. I would say that Rebekah also took on "an uncharacteristic, assertive, decidedly non-feminine" role in her part in this deception, though Deborah and Yael's actions are in a totally different category.

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