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Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

IN THE HEART OF THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM

On the Air with Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner

Every Tuesday and Thursday night Rav Aviner answers questions of Jewish Law and faith on the radio in Israel. On the Air presents a sample of these answers each week.

28 Tishri 5768 – #3

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archived at www.ateret.org.il

SEGULAH FOR MARRIAGE

Q: What segulah (usually understood as a mystical action which will bring about a particular consequence) can I do to find a spouse?

A: There are two things that you can do.

- a. To do everything possible to find a spouse: ask people, check out leads, etc...
This is not a segulah, it is a logical step.
- b. Prayer, repentance and tzedakah. These three actions, which we say in the prayers of the High Holidays, are the biggest segulot. They are segulot for everything in the world.

THE KABBALAH FAD

Q: What is the Rav's opinion about all sorts of people learning Kabbalah? What about after the age of forty?

A: The Shach (Rabbi Shabbatai Ha-Cohain), in his commentary on the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 246:6), writes that one should not learn Kabbalah before the age of forty. This does not mean that after the age of forty everyone may learn Kabbalah. The Arizal (Rabbi Yitzchak Luria), the great mystic, learned Kabbalah before the age of forty. In fact, he died at the age of thirty-eight. Kabbalah is not a subject matter to be studied by all of the Jewish People. It is to be studied only by unique individuals. The Mishnah in Massechet Chagigah (2:1) says that if you know Kabbalah, you may only pass this knowledge to unique people. It is not for everyone. The Shach wrote that one should wait until the age of forty because

there had just been a catastrophe for the Jewish People with Shabbatai Tzvi, the false messiah. People believed that he was the Messiah because they studied Kabbalah, but did not understand it properly. Before learning Kabbalah, one must learn many other subjects: Chumash, Tanach, Mishnah, Gemara, Rambam, Rabbi Yehudah Ha-Levi, sifrei musar (ethical books), etc... You cannot learn differential mathematics or integral mathematics if you do not know basic algebra. In every subject matter one must progress gradually – slowly, slowly. You cannot jump over steps. People are jumping to Kabbalah. We see that non-religious Jews, who have not learned any Torah, are studying Kabbalah. Non-Jews, who do not know anything about Judaism, are studying Kabbalah. It is a spiritual drug. They jump to Kabbalah because it is interesting and nice for their imaginations. One must, however, progress slowly, step-by-step.

Q: Do you teach Kabbalah at Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim?

A: No, but some students who have learned for many years are studying Kabbalah. Each student learns according to his level.

TURNING OFF A CELL PHONE DURING SHEMONEH ESREI

Q: If you remember that you did not to turn off your cell phone, is it necessary to stop in the middle of Shemoneh Esrei to turn it off?

A: Yes, one is required to stop even if there is only a slim chance that someone will call, since this has the potential to disturb other people. It is forbidden to interrupt the Shemoneh Esrei by speaking, but there is no prohibition to interpret by moving. For example, if someone is praying by heart on Rosh Chodesh, and he does not know "Ya'aleh Ve-yavo," he can take a few steps to get a siddur and walk back. This is not considered an interruption. Therefore, since this has the potential to disturb everyone, he should stop for a moment and turn off his cell phone. In fact, this may not even be considered an interruption, since this action is for the prayer itself.

BUG SPRAY ON SHABBAT

Q: Is it permissible to spray bug spray on ants or cockroaches on Shabbat?

A: You may not spray bug spray on ants or cockroaches, because you will kill them, and it is forbidden to kill any creature on Shabbat. What you can do, however, is to spray bug repellent around.

Q: For example, what type of spray?

A: I am not an expert in these types of sprays, but I do know that such things exist. This is similar to mosquito repellent which you spray on your body. It does not kill the mosquitoes, but drives them away. There is a similar type of spray for what you need.