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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.

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Mourner at the dedication of a house

Q: Can a mourner attend a "Chanukat Ha-Bayit – Dedication of a house?"

A: A mourner should not generally attend an event like this because it takes his mind off of the mourning. Even though a "Chanukat Ha-Bayit" is similar to a meal for a mitzvah, he should not attend.

The Evil Inclination

Q: Is the evil inclination really an agent of Hashem?

A: It certainly is. There are no independent powers in the world which are not under the reign of Hashem, and the evil inclination is included. The evil inclination is to test us. Hashem obviously does not want us to listen to the evil inclination. The Ba'al Shem Tov related a parable: There was a king who wanted to know which of his subjects were loyal and which were not. He requested from the viceroy to go out and entice people to revolt against him and see how they would respond. The viceroy went out and said: "This king is no good. We need to replace him. We need to revolt against him." Some of the people said: "Yes, you are right." This obviously pained the viceroy greatly and he would record their names in a little book. Other people said: "You are not embarrassed. How could you say such things?" They would insult him, etc... This obviously made him very happy and he would record their names in a little book. All of a sudden, an elderly man came and said: "My friends, you don't know what is happening here? This guy who is enticing you, I recognize him, he is the viceroy." And everyone left him. When the evil inclination comes

and entices people, we don't have to listen to him. Hashem sent him to test us. We don't have to pay any attention to him. We can shamed him and throw him out.

Talking about current events

Q: Is it permissible to speak about current events or is it "Lashon Ha-Ra" (evil speech)?

A: It is possible to speak about current events without speaking "Lashon Ha-Ra." Someone once related that he visited the Chafetz Chaim and he thought that it would be a like a monastery in which no one speaks. It was not like that, however, the Chafetz Chaim spoke and spoke and spoke without a break. He not only said Divrei Torah, he also spoke about matters relating to the Nation of Israel. It is therefore possible to speak about matters relating to the Nation and the Land of Israel without speaking "Lashon Ha-Ra," but one must be very careful as with all speech. The Torah itself relates many stories. Once in a while there is a negative story – like Korach, but this is permissible. It is all dependent on what is being said.

Kibbutz hotel which rents space to missionaries

Q: Every Shabbat Kibbutz Ramat Rachel rents space to missionaries. Is it permissible to have an affair there, i.e. wedding, etc...?

A: Absolutely not! The Jews on the kibbutz certainly are not missionaries and do not support it. They rent out the space for money. We therefore cannot have an affair there. They will then have to decide if they want the money of G-d-fearing, upright Jews or the money of missionaries. If someone already paid money and invited guests, they can have it there. It was by accident, but from now on it is forbidden. We love all Jews. We love non-observant Jews. We cry, but we love. When it comes to missionaries, however, this is completely different.

Sandek for mamzer

Q: Is it permissible to be a sandek (the one who hold the baby at a bris) for a mamzer (child born from a forbidden relationship)?

A: We are obligated to circumcise a mamzer. If he is a mamzer, we give him a name which will ensure that we remember that he is a mamzer so he will not marry someone who is forbidden to him. For example, we give the name "Kedar" which is the name of one of Yishmael's descendants (Bereshit 25:13). A mamzer is obligated in all of the mitzvot and can be a great Torah scholar. In fact, the Gemara in Horayot (13a) says that a Torah scholar who is a mamzer takes precedence over a Cohain Gadol who is unknowledgeable. The role of a sandek is important. A mohel cannot perform the bris by himself, someone must hold

the baby. May Hashem have mercy that a mamzer was born, but it is a mitzvah to give him a bris.

Single man as sandek

Q: Can a single man serve as a sandek?

A: Yes, it is permissible.

Chanukiyah outside

Q: Why do we light a Chanukah menorah outside?

A: It is a decree of our Sages. Some explain that since the Greeks wanted to extinguish our way of life – the Torah and our culture, we stand before the world and proclaim our commitment to Hashem and Torah. Another explanation is that the Gemara in Shabbat (21b) says that we light the chanukiyah until the time when people have left the market. Rashi explains that the last people in the market were wood sellers. Since they were non-Jews, some explain that we light outside to "publicize the miracle" to non-Jews. Some mitzvot are directed inward and some are directed outward. This mitzvah is directed outward.

Children married in order

Q: Do children in a family have to be married in order?

A: Yes. Lavan says: "It is not so done in our place, to give the younger before the older" (Bereshit 29:26). Although we generally do not rule like Lavan, here we do. This is, however, only if the parents organize the marriages and search for matches for their children. If the child met someone on their own or look on their own, we do not postpone the wedding until after the older children are married.

Q: If the younger is getting married first do they have to ask forgiveness from the older?

A: No, this does not exist. It is certainly proper to tell the older sibling that you love them and care about them, since it may be difficult for them. This is basic humanity.

Learning during repetition of Shemoneh Esrei

Q: Is there any permission to learn during the repetition of the Shemoneh Esrei? I see G-d-fearing Jews and great Torah scholar do so at times.

A: There is no permission. The Mishnah Berurah (see Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 124) explicitly says that one must concentrated during the repetition and not learn Torah. This is especially true for Torah scholars, because if they learn Torah, people who are not Torah scholars will see them and chatter or read the newspaper during the repetition. Besides the

problem itself, it causes other people to act inappropriately. According to the Arizal, the repetition is even greater than the silent Shemoneh Esrei. This is an innovation because the Gemara says that it was established for those who do not know how to daven. It therefore seems that it is less than the prayer, but the Arizal says it is more important. Either way we are obligated to listen. I saw that Rav Avraham Shapira ztz"l would listen and follow along with his finger in the siddur. This is being strict, but you, yourself, should listen and say "amen" and hopefully others will follow your example.

Warning people about hidden charges for a cell phone

Q: Is it permissible to warn people about a cell phone company which sells phones inexpensively, but has hidden charges in the contract?

A: Yes, it is a mitzvah to inform people so that they will be aware that the company only presents a partial picture, but the complete picture is much more complicated. You have to warn people based on the law of giving good advice. "Do not stand over your fellow's blood" (Vayikra 19:16) not only applies if someone wants to murder someone, but even if someone will cause someone else a financial loss.

Atonement for accidentally eating bugs

Q: I accidentally ate bugs which were in rice, how can I repent?

A: You need to do two things. 1. Repent – You need to regret what you have done, which you obviously have, and accept upon yourself not to repeat it. This means that you have to learn the proper way to check food for bugs. 2. Atone – You need to give tzedakah to the hungry. Give food to atone for a sin through food.

"Mi She-Berach" for the sick

Q: How should the prayer "Mi She-Berach" for the sick be recited in shul – reciting each name aloud or each person saying them to themselves?

A: When one person says the "Mi She-berach" for the sick and everyone comes up and gives a name, this takes a lot of time and people do not listen, they chatter, etc... I have suggested that the person begin the prayer and then each person says the name or names to themselves. It is important to remember that this is not a magic prayer which forces Hashem to heal the sick. The Sefer Ha-Chinuch asks how we can pray at all and try to force Hashem to do something. He answers that we are not forcing Hashem, if He responds it is because He is acting merciful towards us. You cannot simply recite a formula, you have to pray and plead or perform an act for the person, such as giving tzedakah. Repentance, prayer and tzedakah remove the harsh decree.