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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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### Blessing on Sufganiyot

Q: What is the blessing on sufganiyot (jelly donuts for Chanukah)?

A: The blessing before is "mezonot" and after is "Al Ha-Mechiya." It is true that if you eat a food made with flour, which is not bread, the quantity of a meal, you have to wash, say "ha-motzi" and "birkat ha-mazon," but this does not apply to sufganiyot which are deep-fried in oil and not baked. If you ate a ton of sufganiyot, the blessings would be the same, but I recommend not to eat a ton because the oil is poison.

### Oil for Pesach

Q: Which oil can I use to light the chanukiyah?

A: Any kosher, normal oil is acceptable. One must be careful not to use oil from Arabs because they add all sorts of thing to it.

### A scoundrel within the permission of the Torah

Q: How is it that I see observant Jews who are not good and moral people?

A: It is not enough for a person to just learn Torah in order to be righteous. He must also work on perfecting his character traits. The Rambam explains in Shemoneh Perakim that if a person does not do an accounting of their soul, he can make mistakes, even serious mistakes. Our Sages say that if a person merits – the Torah will be a drug of life and if he does not merit – it will be the drug of death (Yoma 72b). The same Torah can be the elixir of life, goodness and blessing for one person and it can be lethal for another. The Torah can actual teach him tricks and deceptions. We therefore also need good character traits. This

obviously does not refer to the entire Nation of Israel which is a good and righteous Nation, but to individual people who have free choice. When people act this way, this is what our Sages call "Desecration of Hashem's Name" at the end of the Gemara of Yoma (86a). They say that if a person learns Torah, but he is not careful about how he speaks – he insults and speaks ill of others, he is not honest in his business practices – he deceives and lies, people will say: "Woe is the person who learns Torah. Woe is his father who taught him Torah. Woe is his Rabbi who taught him Torah. See how corrupt are the ways and how ugly are the acts of this person who has learned Torah." As a result, Hashem's Name is desecrated. If, however, a person learns Torah and he speaks pleasantly, and he is honest in his business practices – he pays his obligations and does so on time, people will say: "Praiseworthy is the person who learns Torah. Praiseworthy is his father who taught him Torah. Praiseworthy is his Rabbi who taught him Torah. See how pleasant are the ways and how sweet are the actions of this person who learns Torah." As a result Hashem's Name is sanctified as it says, "You Israel, I am praised through you" (Yeshayahu 49:3). A Jew once came to the Steipler Gaon and the Steipler said, "Give me a mazel tov. My granddaughter is getting engaged." The Jew said, "Rav, how do you choose a groom?" The Steipler said, "It is simple. A lamdan (one who learns Torah seriously) with good character traits." The visitor said, "If he is a lamdan, doesn't he have good traits?" The Steipler said: "It is not necessarily true. A lamdan is a person who stood before a shetender (podium on which students learn). A shetender is a very comfortable product. You can move it anyway you want. You can move it forward or backward. You can say what to want to it. Go away, I am tired or I am going to the store. A spouse, however, is not a shetender. A person may have learned a lot of Torah, but he does not know how to relate to a spouse." The visitor said: "But he learned Torah, doesn't this have an effect on his personality?" "It absolutely had an effect. If he had not learned Torah, he would have been a monster. In merit of learning Torah, he is a person with bad traits." Thus, every person who learns Torah, but is immoral, we must understand that without the Torah – oy va-voy – he would have been horrible. In the introduction to "Mesillat Yesharim," the Ramchal writes that people learn all sorts of holy works, but people do not learn "tikun midot" – perfecting character traits. The book "Cheshbon Ha-Nefesh" says that in the time of the Tanach, they said something once and they would remember and do it. The later generations descended and there was a need to constantly repeat. We see this is the time of the Mishnah. It says over and over, "He would say...He would say...He would say." And this is even more so for us. We need to hear something a thousand times, and have a spiritual accounting to see how we are doing. The Torah was not given immediately with the Creation of the world. Why? Isn't the Torah the foundation of the world? Answer: This is to teach us that proper conduct precedes Torah. For two thousand years, they had to

work on their character traits until our forefathers – Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaacov – perfected their traits and this is the foundation on which the Torah was given.

#### One big shul or many little shuls

Q: Is it better to have one big shul or many little shuls?

A: We always say that "The glory of the King is in the multitude of the people" (Mishlei 14:28). A big shul with a lot of people is a great sanctification of Hashem's Name. Sometimes, however, prayer in a big shul is problematic because people chatter, etc... In such a case it is better to be in a little shul where they do not talk. In general, it is better to have a big shul with everyone together, the entire Nation of Israel. If there are different traditions of davening and different custom – Ashkenazim, Sefardim, Yeminite, etc..., it is no big deal. They take turns leading the davening. This is preferable.

#### Time for Lecha Dodi

Q: Is it permissible to say Lecha Dodi after Shabbat has already begun?

A: It is appropriate to recite Lecha Dodi before Shabbat since it is to welcome the Shabbat bride. We see, however, that many shuls daven on Friday night at the last moment and they say it after Shabbat begins, excluding the summer when many daven early. This song is a very late addition to the prayers, written by Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz and there is no obligation to say it, but it is a widespread custom. In any event, one should accept Shabbat a little before Shabbat begins in order to fulfill the mitzvah of "tosefet Shabbat – adding to Shabbat."

#### Discussing a recipe on Shabbat

Q: Is it permissible to discuss a recipe on Shabbat?

A: While it is obviously forbidden to cook on Shabbat, it is permissible to discuss something is made. If I want to make a cake after Shabbat, I cannot learn how to make it on Shabbat. This is preparing on Shabbat for a weekday which is forbidden. If I am simply interested, however, it is permissible for me to be interested on Shabbat. On Shabbat, it is permissible for me to be interested how a cell phone is made. I like hearing about different things. It is therefore permissible.

#### Answering the phone on Shabbat when one's mother is sick

Q: My mother is 93 years old and has constant care. I told her that if she needs help, she should call me on Shabbat. She called last Shabbat, I answered and she was hospitalized for a week. Did I act properly answering the phone?

A: Absolutely. This was a potentially life-threatening situation. Furthermore, picking up the phone receiver is a rabbinic prohibition and would be permissible in even less severe situations.

#### Calling relative outside of Israel while it is still Shabbat there

Q: Is it permissible to call my sister, who does not keep Shabbat and who lives outside of Israel, while it is still Shabbat there, but after Shabbat in Israel?

A: It is certainly forbidden. The fact that she desecrates Shabbat is a sin, but we do not throw rocks at her. At the same time, however, we will not cause her to violate Shabbat. It is forbidden to place a stumbling block before the blind and it is forbidden to aid someone in performing a transgression, and here it is even more so. I entice her to perform a transgression.

#### Rabbi giving kosher certification to product he does not eat

Q: Can a Rabbi give kosher certification to a product which he does not eat?

A: Yes, he can verify that a particular product is kosher, but he is strict not to eat it.

#### Parve cake in fleishchig oven

Q: If I baked a cake in a fleishchig oven, is it still parve?

A: If you preheated the oven, which burns off any substance, even without waiting twenty-four hours, it is still parve.

#### Lending pool pass to someone

Q: Can I lend my pool pass to someone else?

A: This is a monetary question which is dependent on the agreement. You need to ask the people who run the pool whether this pass is for a particular individual – only for you – or whether others can use it. Very simple.

#### Can a mourner have an aliyah during "shiva"

Q: It is forbidden because it is forbidden for a mourner to learn Torah. During the week, Ashkenazim bring a Torah to the house and read without calling up the mourner, and Sefardim daven at the mourner's house and then go to shul, except the mourner, to hear the Torah.