



PO Box 1076 Jerusalem 91009 * Tel. 972-2-628-4101

Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

IN THE HEART OF THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM

On the Air with Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner

Rav Aviner answers questions of Jewish Law and faith on the radio in Israel on Tuesday & Thursday nights (To listen: www.kimizion.org/shiur/shut.html). On the Air presents a sample each week.

16 Adar Rishon – #22

Prepared by Rabbi Mordechai Friedfertig

RavAviner-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

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Court case against a Jew during Adar

Q: Our tradition says that the month of Adar is an auspicious time for a court case, does this also apply to a case against a fellow Jew?

A: This is a good question since the source of this idea is that we were victorious over the non-Jews during this month, we therefore say that it is a good month for us. If this is a case against a Jew, however, this is quite different. This is also said regarding a case in the non-Jewish courts. Even if a Jew makes a claim against you in a non-Jewish court, he is acting inappropriately, but this does not make him a non-Jew. I therefore do not think that this whole idea applies.

Sleeping in gloves

Q: If a person slept in gloves, does he have to do "netilat yadayim" (ritually washing his hands) in the morning?

A: Yes, this washing is not an external uncleanness and the gloves protected him, but an inner uncleanness, since sleep is 1/60th of death. One therefore is required to wash "netilat yadayim." Why would there be a problem of "netilat yadayim" in the morning?

Q: The cold.

A: You can wash with warm water and even the cold water the water is also not that cold. I once went to the mikveh and it was undergoing repairs so there was no hot water for a long time. When I came in, there was a Jew in front of me. I said: Is there hot water? He said (in a Russian accent): My commanding officer in the army said that water is always hot. It is clear: In Russia it was negative sixty degrees, the water was therefore always hot. I said: You were in the Russia army? He said: Yes. I asked him: Gehinom (Purgatory)? He said: A mini gehinom. I said: It is better here. He said: Much better. Incomparable. Baruch Hashem.

Buying books with tzedakah

Q: Is it permissible to buy holy books with tzedakah?

A: Tzedakah is for the poor.

Q: Why then are there authorities who permit it?

A: In the past, books were extremely expensive, the equivalent of 10,000 shekels today. People bought books with tzedakah on condition that the poor could use them. Books are inexpensive today, twenty to fifty shekels, and the poor do not need them. This opinion therefore does not apply.

Time watching program on computer

Q: How much time can a child watch religious, educational programs on the computer?

A: There are two important aspects: Quality and quantity. Quality: You must ensure the content is kosher. Quantity: Not too much. What is "not too much"? Once every two days, once a week, once every two weeks. I do not know how to give an exact definition. You need to limit this activity, even if it is a good program, since it stupefies a person. Most of the programs are simple and shallow. This damages a person, but a small amount is okay. The best is not to watch at all, but there are other factors involved.

Informing fellow workers of rights

Q: Is it permissible to tell fellow workers about their benefits if the employer is not doing so?

A: Yes, based on the law of returning a lost object. They lost something, but they do not know it. You are returning it to them. "Do not stand over your fellow's blood." This is not only if someone is going to kill someone else, but even if he is going to lose money.

Relying on a miracle

Q: Can my neighbor, who is a mother with a newborn, turn on the heat if she does not have the money to pay the heating bill and rely on a miracle?

A: She may turn it on because it is a life-threatening situation. A few people have already died from the cold, and it is especially dangerous for a newborn. There is, however, a different solution. You need to collect money for her. All of the neighbors should chip in a small amount of money for her heat. This is the answer to the question. Sometimes complex arguments are needed to answer halachic questions, but this is the answer here. The Chasidic Rebbe of Tzanz once said that when he was young he could answer difficult halachic questions with complex solutions, but now that he is old he does not have the ability. He will therefore answer a simple difficulty. On the one hand, it is right before Pesach and it is forbidden for people to eat chametz (leaven), but people do not have enough money to buy matzah, etc... On the other hand, it is forbidden to steal. Solution. No one is leaving here until you give money to resolve this difficulty. We therefore do not need complex Torah arguments here. We need everyone to donate a small amount of money for heat for this woman. If you cannot collect enough money, call me and I will send you the money.

A student who davens for a long time

Q: A girl in seventh grade does not like davening in class with the other student and wants to daven on her own for a longer time. What should we do?

A: There are set times in school. Obviously, they are not written in the Torah, but without set times the entire framework will crumb. She therefore has to finish davening with everyone else. If she wants to daven more, she can daven before or after school. It is impossible for everyone to do her own thing. She also needs order to help build proper character traits. We do not force her to attend this school, but these are the rules of the school and every school has its rules. It is known that one must daven with a minyan, the prayer of an individual – no matter how great or righteous he or she may be – is incomplete. He must daven with a community and there is great strength in communal prayer. While it is not a halachic obligation for her, there is a deeper meaning of this Halachah. She needs to be with everyone else, she needs to eat with everyone else and she needs to daven with everyone else. Obviously, you need to explain this to her gently and with great sensitivity.
