



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.

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Prepared by Rabbi Mordechai Friedfertig

RavAviner-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

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Visiting the Bahai Temple in Haifa

Q: Is it permissible to visit the Bahai Gardens and Temple in Haifa?

A: It is certainly forbidden to enter a Temple of idol worship or anything connected to idol worship, but the Bahai faith is not idol worship. The Bahai faith is a universal, general belief which was a reform breakaway from Islam. They believe in loving everyone, human respect, world unity and other universal values. They also do not hate the Nation of Israel and do not wage war against the Nation of Israel which Muslims do to our distress. It is a good sign that they have positive relations with the Nation of Israel who has returned to the Land of Israel. They had Muslim roots, but they are not Muslims. Islam is also not forbidden, but there is still a problem with it because it has as a belief that the Torah was nullified. It is therefore a false belief. This is what Rabbi Yosef Albo writes at the beginning of Sefer Ha-Ikarim that Islam is a false belief, since it "erases" the Torah. This is the error of

Islam, but the Bahai faith is not Islam. It is therefore permissible to enter the Temple which is built over the grave of its first leader, "Bab," and to see the beautiful gardens.

Cohanim in Ma'arat Ha-Machpelah in Hevron

Q: Is it permissible for a cohanin to enter Ma'arat Ha-Machpelah?

A: There is a halachic dispute if the graves of the righteous are impure. If the graves of the righteous are not impure, then it would be permissible for cohanim to enter Ma'arat Ha-Machpelah, Kever Rachel, the grave of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, etc... While some permit it, most authorities rule that the graves of the righteous are impure and that it is forbidden for cohanim to enter. It is not possible to give lashes to someone who does enter, since there are those who permit it. Some authorities also explain that Ma'arat Ha-Machpelah is built so that the lower structure where the graves are located is covered and detached from the building. Much has been written about this issue. I do not know much about this, since I am a cohanin and I have never been inside Ma'arat Ha-Machpelah. Maran Ha-Rav Kook did not enter and I am not more righteous than him, so I also do not enter. The same question applies to Kever Rachel. Even according to the opinion that the graves of the righteous are impure, some say that the building was made in a way to make it permissible. Again, Maran Ha-Rav Kook did not enter, so I did not.

Difficulty in reciting birkat ha-mazon

Q: Many times when I eat, my baby cries, I take care of him and the time for reciting birkat ha-mazon passes. What should I do?

A: If you began to eat, you must recite birkat ha-mazon. You can sometimes shorten the birkat ha-mazon and end after "Ve-Al Yechasrenu" and then recite the "Ha-Rachaman, Ha-Rachaman, Ha-Rachaman" later. You have to plan it out so that you can eat and recite the birkat ha-mazon. If the baby cries, you do not need to jump up and immediately care for him. If I not talking about the case where something happened to him, but where he is simply crying. It is not healthy for a baby if you run to him every time he makes a peep. Some psychologists says that one should be a good mother, but not too good of a mother. This is not because we do not love our children, but we do not want them to think that their needs will always be immediately met. They will be overly pampered and not value what others do for them. Even if you are not in the middle of the birkat ha-mazon, you do not need to run immediately for every peep.

"Shehakol" for nursing baby

Q: Should I recite "shehakol" for my baby before he nurses?

A: No, he is exempt from the blessings and other mitzvot, since he is young.

Sitting on the floor on Shabbat

Q: Is it permissible to sit on the floor on Shabbat since some say that it is a sign of mourning (and it is forbidden to display signs of mourning on Shabbat)?

A: The basic Halachah is that it is permissible to sit on the floor on Shabbat and our ancestors did so. Some people are strict based on Kabbalah not to sit directly on the floor, but rather to sit on something. It is therefore permissible to sit on the floor, especially children who often play on the floor.

Painting a mourner's apartment

Q: My wife is in mourning, can we paint our apartment?

A: There are two issues. 1. We do not find a prohibition against painting a mourner's home. 2. It is not only the mourner's home, the other people who live there who are not mourners. Even if it was forbidden to paint, it would be permissible for them. They do not need to mourn. A more serious example: it is forbidden to listen to music during mourning, but there are other people in the house and they want to listen to music. It is permissible for them to listen and if the mourner hears the music it is a benefit which comes to a person against his will (Pesachim 26). Here, however, there is no prohibition to paint.

A non-Jew putting Tefillin on a Jew

Q: Is it permissible for a non-Jew who takes care of a Jew to help him put on his Tefillin?

A: There are two issues: One needs to put on Tefillin and one needs to have Tefillin on him. The essential matter is to have the Tefillin on him. A non-Jew can therefore help put them on. If there is a choice, a Jew should certainly put them on his fellow Jew, since he is also obligated in the mitzvah.

An uncircumcised Jew

Q: Is a Jew who has not had a "brit milah" forbidden to marry?

A: He is a Jew who is lacking an important mitzvah, but this does not render him unfit to marry. A Jew is a Jew even if he is not circumcised.