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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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The Olympics

Q: Are the Olympics idol worship or connected to idol worship?

A: The Olympics were not idol worship in the past, but simply sport. People involved idol worship in the Olympics since they connected idol worship to everything. Today, the Olympics are certainly not idol worship. Nonetheless, watching competitive sports is nonsense and is called "moshav leitzim" – frivolity (Avodah Zarah 18b). It is fine if a person wants to play sports and strengthen his body or to get some fresh air, but to watch how others play a sport is prohibited because of "moshav leitzim." It dulls the brain. Furthermore, one needs to look up to Torah scholars, people who perform acts of loving-kindness, soldiers who serve with self-sacrifice, etc... and not to someone who can get a ball into a certain spot. I recall that people once asked a great Torah scholar in the old settlement of Jerusalem if it is permissible to play soccer on Shabbat. He asked: What is soccer? They said: You try to get a ball into a net. He said: You can put it in the net on Friday. They said: But they want to play on Shabbat. He asked: Why? They said: Because there is another team and they are taunting them. He said in innocence: Then they are

crazy and therefore exempt from Shabbat. We clearly understand that all of this is nonsense and Torah scholars have opposed it. One must be involved with positive activities.

Purim and the Holocaust

Q: Why did Hashem save us during the time of Purim, but not during the Holocaust?

A: We do not know the secrets of Hashem. We obviously do not understand the Holocaust. While our Rabbi, Rav Tzvi Yehudah Kook, taught at length why the Holocaust occurred (see *Sichot Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah – Moadim*, vol. 2), he said both before and after speaking about it that it is a divine secret. We grasp in the dark in order to understand what happened, but with or without Purim, we do not understand. We also do not know when it comes to individuals why one person is murdered and not another. My dear brother-in-law was murdered by a terrorist in the street and this was worse than the Holocaust for my sister-in-law. The Holocaust destroyed one-third of the Nation of Israel, but my brother-in-law was everything to my sister-in-law. The Gemara in Yevamot (50a) says that Hashem establishes how long each person will live – it is the secret of souls. Someone once traveled to the United States to raise money and recruit students for the Hevron Yeshiva. One student who he recruited was killed in the riots in Hevron. Whenever he returned to the States, he feared that he would meet the father and he would travel in a round-about way in order not to meet him. One day he met the father on a street corner. The father took him by the shoulders and said: "You took my son to Hevron and he was killed. This was a sign that Hashem decided to take him. If he would have stayed here, he would have been killed by some gang in Chicago, now he was killed for the sake of our Land, the sanctification of Hashem's Name and the Torah. Therefore, I have been looking for you to thank you." The Master of the Universe sometimes performs a miracle for us and sometimes He does not. Joseph Stalin also wanted to destroy the Jews. He planned to transfer all of the Jews to Siberia in one day. Everything was ready – trains, buses, trucks, cars, etc... The plan was for half of the Jews to die on the way and half of them to die in Siberia. Stalin died Erev Purim, three days before the plan. I was a little kid. I remember that in shul on Shabbat everyone was very excited after davening and drank a "lechaim." I asked them in Yiddish: *Wos? Wos? – What? What?* They told me: Stalin died. I asked: Who is Stalin? They said: The leader of Russia. Like any child I asked: A good non-Jew or a bad non-Jew? They said: A bad non-Jew, very bad. I said: Then me give a "lechaim" too. But they didn't know how bad he was. We only learned later. Sometimes there are miracles and sometimes there are not miracles. A friend of mine who is a high-ranking officer in the army told me: "We have prevented 300 terrorist attacks. We captured three hundred terrorists with explosive belts." It was not that they thought that perhaps the terrorists would do something – they caught

them with the explosive belts. But there is sometimes one terrorist who they do not capture. Why this one and not that one? Why was is this person injured and not that one? Why was this person killed and not that person? We do not know. These are the secrets of Hashem.

A play during mourning

Q: I am in mourning for my mother and my son's yeshiva is presenting a play with serious content. My son is not in the play, but he is in the stage crew. Is it permissible for me to attend?

A: This subject is divided into two parts: 1. Quite simply, it is forbidden to attend plays during mourning. It is also forbidden to attend other functions with many people since you will bump into all sorts of friends there. 2. If your attendance is not in order to benefit from the play, but to show support for your son, you may attend and benefiting from the play is considered an unintended act (Pesachim 25). You may therefore attend the play, but not other parts of the program, i.e. cast party, etc...

Taking someone's bag by mistake

Q: I was in the shuk (the market) and accidently took someone else's bag. I brought it back to the store, but I am not sure that they will come back to get it. What else should I do?

A: Since there is no real solution, we should estimate the worth of the contents of the bag and give that amount to a tzedakah which benefits the entire Nation of Israel. This means that you should not give to a particular yeshiva, but to a place that benefits everybody, since the person will then benefit from it. For example, Tzahal or a big hospital in the city. In the past, they would give such money to the wells from which people drank when ascending to the Temple for the holidays. Such things, to our distress, occur. You are not the first and will not be the last.

Immersing a vegetable peeler

Q: Does a vegetable peeler require immerse in a mikveh?

A: Yes, since it comes in direct contact with the food when the food is in an edible state.