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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/shuf.html). On the Air presents a sample each week.

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Studying in University

Q: Is it permissible to study in a university?

A: It is dependent on two aspects. 1. The area of study. There are kosher subjects such as mathematics and there are non-kosher subjects such as biblical criticism. There are also subjects which are a mixture such as psychology. It contains proper ideas, but sometimes there are outlooks which are inappropriate. If the subject is forbidden, it is forbidden. If it is permissible, it is permissible. If it is permissible and sometimes there are issues, one must be careful to ring the bell of criticism against those ideas. 2. There is the atmosphere. Sometimes the atmosphere at a university is not filled with awe of Heaven and a person can be drawn to this atmosphere and stumble. If the atmosphere is problematic, one should either not attend or stay clear – both physically and spiritually – from people who act inappropriately. If it is possible to study the same subject in a religious institution, this is certainly preferable.

A widow becoming impregnated by her deceased husband

Q: Is it permissible for a widow to become impregnated by the frozen sperm of her deceased husband?

A: It is forbidden to perform such an act from a deceased man. First of all, a deceased man is not obligated in the mitzvah to be fruitful and multiply. A deceased man is not obligated in the mitzvot at all. He is free. Secondly, it is forbidden to cause a child (or anyone for that matter) sorrow. The Torah says over and over: an orphan is unfortunate, an orphan is unfortunate. But sometimes there is an orphan and we have mercy on him. Here, however, we create a child orphaned from his father with our own hands! And he is even worse than an orphan, because an orphan had a father and he died, but here the man died and only then did he become an orphan. We must explain to the child that he never had a father. We understand that the mother is suffering from loneliness and she would be happy if she had a baby, but we do not save her from loneliness by causing a child to suffer his entire life.

Lighting Shabbat candles by a guest

Q: When I am at home, I light seven Shabbat candles corresponding to the seven aliyot to the Torah on Shabbat and use olive oil. When I am a guest for Shabbat, should I also act this way?

A: This custom applies when you are at home, but when you are a guest you should light two candles and use which ever candles or oil they have in order not to burden your host.

Giving a book to the shul

Q: We gave a book to the shul in order for people would learn from it. No one is learning from it. Can we take it back since we will learn from it at home?

A: Yes, since you gave it on condition and the condition is not being fulfilled, it is permissible to take it back. If you wishes, you can give another book in its place, but you are not obligated.

The order of the prayer "Ein Keloheinu"

Q: Why do we first say "Ein Keloheinu" (There is none like our G-d) and then "Mi Keloheinu" (Who is like our G-d)?

A: One must first know that there is none like our G-d, i.e. one needs complete faith. After one has clear faith, he may ask questions. We do not prevent a person from analyzing and asking questions, but the starting point of all of the questions is "There is none like our G-d."