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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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A father who is a mourner attending his son's wedding

Q: May a father who is in mourning attend his son's wedding?

A: A father and mother have a unique status regarding the laws of mourning. We do not permit other mourners to attend a wedding. The mourners may attend the chupah, but not the festive meal. A parent is different, however, since the point of this law is that it is forbidden for a mourner to rejoice. If a father does not attend his son's wedding, it is not that he will be prevented from rejoicing, it will cause him great distress. This is not the goal. Many authorities, therefore, permit a parent in mourning to attend their child's wedding (see Rav Ovadiah Yosef in Hilchot Chatan Ve-Kallah).

Kashrut mix-up

Q: We accidentally placed cold dairy food in a fleischig dish. What should we do?

A: Wash the dish very well.

Speaking to children in a language besides Hebrew

Q: It is proper to speak to children in a language other than Hebrew if one of the parent's mother-tongue is a language other than Hebrew (but this parent can speak Hebrew)?

A: This is not a good idea. We are not against a person being dual-lingual. It is often beneficial: to teach Torah to people from other countries or to learn a trade or to do business. Nonetheless, a child – as much as possible – needs to breathe clean air. A child should learn as much Torah as possible and not secular subjects, and a child should speak Hebrew as much as possible and not other languages. They can learn another language later. While a child who learns a language from birth will be more proficient in that language, Hebrew – the holy language – is our language. Sometimes it is necessary to speak to a child in another language when the grandparents do not speak Hebrew, but you should not create an atmosphere of a foreign language in your home. I am not speaking about the radical approach of Eliezer Ben Yehudah who displayed great self-sacrifice to speak to his wife and son solely in Hebrew. Even though it was difficult for the child, Ben Yehudah did not give in at all. In the period in which they made aliyah (5642), people barely spoke Hebrew in Israel. Each community spoke its own language: Yiddish, Ladino, Arabic, etc... Only when these different groups came together did they speak broken Hebrew. Ben Yehudah had a vision of reviving Hebrew and so they only spoke Hebrew regardless of the difficulty. In my home, I – the lowly one – only spoke Hebrew. Even though I know French, Germany, English and Yiddish, I only spoke Hebrew. My wife also knows English, and even better than me, but we only spoke Hebrew, even when we didn't want the kids to know what we were saying. They grew up in an environment of Hebrew and they later studied other languages.

Removing Tefillin and erasing Hashem's Name

Q: How is it permissible to remove the Tefillin straps on the hand which we wrap in the form of Hashem's Name – "Shin," "dalet" and "hey" (Shaddai)? Isn't this erasing Hashem's Name which is forbidden?

A: Removing the Tefillin straps is not erasing Hashem's Name since this is not the type of writing which the Torah is discussing. The Torah is discussing Hashem's Name written with ink on paper. The letters formed by the Tefillin straps are similar to letters on blocks. It is permissible to line up three blocks with a "shin," "dalet" and "hey" and take them apart. This applies both on Shabbat when writing and erasing is forbidden and regarding the prohibition of erasing Hashem's Name.