



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

29 Tammuz – #44

Prepared by Rabbi Mordechai Friedfertig

RavAviner-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

archived at www.ateret.org.il/new/home.php

Questions in this issue.

1. Electric razors
2. Found cigarettes
3. Kashrut of the Kinneret
4. Miriam's Well in the Kinneret
5. Refrigerator light on Shabbat

Electric razors

Q: Which electric razors are permissible to use and which are forbidden?

A: This is a very different subject. When electric shavers were invented approximately one hundred years ago, our Rabbis had a dispute as to whether they were permissible or not. The majority of halachic authorities ruled that it is forbidden to use electric razors, since they were similar to a razor. The Torah says (Vayikra 19:27): "Do not destroy the corners of your beard." Based on the word "destroy" (takifu), the Halachah is that it is permissible to cut one's beard with scissors, but not with a razor (see Shulchan Aruch, Yoreah Deah #181). Scissors have an upper blade and a lower blade, and the lower blade guards the skin from the upper blade and does not allow the beard to be destroyed. A razor, however, directly touches the skin and destroys the hair. The Rabbis wrote that electric razors, which do not have an upper and lower blade but only one blade, are similar to a razor. There is a minority of Rabbis who permit electric razors, such as Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank (quoted in Shut Minchat

Yitzchak 4:113), who permits it on condition that one does not put the electric razor too close to the skin. The majority of Rabbis, however, prohibit its use (see the comprehensive volume on this subject of almost 1000 pages, "Sefer Hadrat Panim Zakan"/"The Cutting and Growth of the Beard in Halachic Perspective", by Rav Moshe Wiener, who has compiled everything available on this issue and the myriad of Rabbis who opposed the use of electric razors). As time has passed, this question has become even more severe, since electric razors have become more and more efficient. The filament guard, which covers the blade, has become thinner and more flexible. They have also invented the "Lift and Cut Razor" in which the beard hairs are pulled outward and cut, and the remnant of the hair return to its hair follicle. As a result, one cuts not only the hair which is on the skin, but hair which is even deeper. We therefore must certainly prohibit their use. The problem is that there are many religious Jews who use electric razors including students of Lithuanian Yeshivot, Sefardic Yeshivot and Religious-Zionist Yeshivot (although this is not the case in Chasidic Yeshivot). There are even some Roshei Yeshivot who are clean-shaven. We are therefore obligated to find a solution. Ha-Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach is quoted in the book "Halichot Shlomo" (on Tefillah, chapter 2, p. 11) that one should not place the electric razor too close to the skin and the litmus test if it is far enough away is if you rub your hand over the skin and you can still feel the scruff. There are other authorities who permit electric razors based on different explanations such as that the razor does not cut, but tear. In conclusion, the majority of Rabbis prohibit the use of electric razors. A minority permit certain models or under certain circumstances. It is better, however, to have a beard and save ourselves from all of these problems. Maran (our revered teacher) Ha-Rav Kook writes in one of his letter (Shut Orach Mishpat, Orach Chaim 34): "What?! There are shoachim (ritual slaughterers) here who do not have beards?! How is this possible?" He was shocked. It is therefore better to have a beard, but we should not go overboard if someone does not have one. There is a story about a Holocaust survivor who knew the Satmar Rebbe before the Holocaust and came to visit the Rebbe in America. The students saw a clean-shaven Jew speaking about all sorts of Torah subjects with the Rebbe and they were surprised. After he left, one of the students asked the Rebbe, who is this clean-shaven person who came to speak with the Rebbe? The Satmar Rebbe responded: "When that Jew ascends to give a divine accounting, Hashem will ask him: "Jew, where is your beard?" But when you ascend to give a divine accounting, Hashem will ask you: "Beard, where is your Jew?"

Found cigarettes

Q: Our son found a box of cigarettes in shul on a weekday and threw it in the garbage since they are detrimental to one's health. Was he correct or is there an obligation to return the lost cigarettes?

A: It is correct that it is forbidden to smoke, but it is not our job to enforce it. It is that person's job. Furthermore, it is not a foregone conclusion that this smoker was violating a prohibition, since it is possible that he only smokes one cigarette a week. Many years ago, I use to visit a Rabbi each week and ask him all sorts of questions. One day he brought out a cigarette box and began to smoke. He obviously did not have to say anything to me, but he was extremely humble. He said: I smoke once a week. Therefore, your son need to hang a sign that says: Anyone who lost a box of cigarettes should call me.

Kashrut of the Kinneret

Q: Is the water of the Kinneret kosher, since it contains dead fish, gas, etc...?

A: All of the things are nullified in the huge amount of clean water in the Kinneret. If there is a question, is it whether the water of the Kinneret is Kosher for Pesach since perhaps people threw bread in it and "chametz" is never nullified. For the rest of the year, there is no such problem. Furthermore, the waters of the Kinneret are always flowing with new water entering it. The water is therefore kosher.

Miriam's Well in the Kinneret

Q: Is Miriam's Well in the Kinneret?

A: Yes, but we do not know where. In order to find it, one needs the divine spirit like the Arizal had and which we do not.

Refrigerator light on Shabbat

Q: What should we do on Shabbat if we open the refrigerator door and the light goes on?

A: First of all, we recommend that anyone who buys a refrigerator, takes the bulb and throws it in the garbage for now and forever, since major errors can occur from it on Shabbat. If this nonetheless occurs, you should not close the door but place a towel on the door so that it does not close. Food that is perishable should be placed in the freezer or placed in a neighbor's refrigerator and non-perishable food should be pushed to the back of the refrigerator.

Special thank you to Fred Casden for editing "On the Air"