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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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Learning Torah and playing guitar

Q: I take care of my mother for long periods and relax by playing the guitar. How much time is it permissible for me to play guitar without it being considered "bitul Torah" (neglect of Torah learning)?

A: There are two opinions which define "bitul Torah". 1. One opinion says that a person is obligated to learn Torah every free moment and he is only exempt when performing essential needs, such as performing mitzvot, make a livelihood, eating, etc... Therefore, if playing the guitar is essential for your spiritual health, it is permissible to play when you need it. If it is unessential, you cannot play. 2. There is another opinion that a person is permitted to engage in other activities on condition that he sets times for learning Torah. In the remaining time, he can do what he wants provided it is a kosher activity. We then say that anyone is praiseworthy who increases his time learning Torah. We do not necessitate you to learn Torah every moment, but encourage you to learn as much as possible. According to this opinion, you can play the guitar since you really enjoy doing so.

Daf Yomi or practical Halachah

Q: Which is preferable to learn – Daf Yomi (a page of Gemara a day) or practical Halachah?

A: It is a personal decision. A person only learns [well] what his heart desires [to learn] (Avodah Zarah 19a), since if he learns that which he desires, it will penetrate deeper, change his character traits for the better and awake the desire within him to learn more and more.

"May you live to 120 years old!"

Q: Why do we bless people that they should live "until 120" when Pirkei Avot (5:21) says that if a person is over 100 years old it is as if he ceases from the world?

A: When we bless someone that they should live "until 120," it is an exaggeration. Nowhere does it say that a person needs to live until 120. The Torah does say that "his (man's) days will be 120" (Bereshit 6:3) which means that from the moment that Hashem saw the evilness of the generation of the Flood, He gave an estimate of what a person's lifespan would be. Some live less and sometimes some live longer. We certainly do bless a person to live, but we say that they should live long and good lives – both long and good. Pirkei Avot explains here that sometimes one has a long life with low quality of life. We do not decide what Hashem does, but we are discussing our prayers. We therefore bless people that they should have long and good lives.

Havdalah on Tisha Be-Av which falls on Motza'ei Shabbat

Q: Does an ill person who is allowed to eat have to perform havdalah on Tisha Be-Av which falls on Motza'ei Shabbat before eating?

A: Yes, he is required to say havdalah since it is forbidden to eat without first having performed havdalah. But he should only drink a small amount of wine and it is preferable to use a drink other than wine like grape juice (see Shaarei Teshuvah 556:1, Shemirat Shabbat Ke-Hilchata 62:46 and Halichot Shlomo vol. 3, p. 423).

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