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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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Receiving the US child tax credit in Israel

Q: Is it permissible to temporarily leave Israel in order to fly to the United States in order to attain US passports for our children so we can receive the child tax credit for them?

A: As is known, it is forbidden to leave the Land of Israel. It is, however, permissible to temporarily leave Israel to make a living. Making a living is not that I am starving. I have money, but I can earn more. One may temporarily leave Israel for this purpose. "Temporarily" means a week or so. Money does not grow on trees. If a person can earn a decent amount of money by traveling outside of Israel, why shouldn't he be allowed to do so? It is not an educational problem for children, you can explain it to them. If there is a question, it is a more general one. Is it permissible to receive tzedakah from Americans? We are not Americans, we are here. Why should an American taxpayer support me here? If I was born in America and contributed to America and now I made aliyah, I can say to Americans: "I contributed a lot to you and you still have not contributed as much to me." In this case, it is certainly seem justifiable to take. But if I did contribute to America, how can I take? This is not only an ethical problem, it is a halachic one. There is a discussion if we can take tzedakah from non-Jews. The Gemara in Sanhedrin (26b and see Tosafot and Rashi) says that one who takes tzedakah from non-Jews is like one who eats "something else," i.e. pig. And the Gemara in Baba Batra explains the verse "dried up produce will

break" (Yeshayahu 27:11) that when produce is dry it will break, but it will not do so when it is wet. Similarly, when you allow the non-Jews to give tzedakah, they increase in merit and power. It is not so clear that we can take tzedakah. But if I am a dual-citizen and I contributed, it is not tzedakah. Others explain that this is not simply American money, it is also money from Jews. The money also comes from Jewish taxpayers in American and it is obviously permissible to take tzedakah from Jews. The Jews would be happy to know that other Jews are receiving it. Rav Kook in Shut Da'at Cohain (#132) was asked: is it permissible to receive tzedakah from a general charity fund from outside of Israel? He said: yes, since Jews also donate to it. Therefore, it is ethical: if you contributed, you are receiving something in return and if you did not contribute, it is money from Jews. Therefore, it is permissible to temporarily leave Israel to be eligible for the child tax credit. People have also asked me: Should I vote in the US Presidential elections? I do not think so. We live here. Even though some people have US citizenship, who gives us permission to interfere with what is happening in America? When one comes to live in Israel it is similar to a divorce, even if the wife received alimony (i.e. social security), she should not interfere in the husband's life. It is true that we can decide which person will be a better President for the Jews, but it is not ethical because we live here and not in America.

Parents and walking down the aisle

Q: Is it permissible at a wedding for the groom's parents to walk the groom down the aisle and the bride's parents to walk the bride down the aisle? This is the way my son and soon to be daughter-in-law would like to do it at the wedding.

A: The custom in Israel is not to do so. The custom, based on modesty, is for the two fathers to escort the groom and the two mothers to escort the bride. This has been the custom throughout the generations. This was also the custom in America. In Shut Mishneh Halachot, Rav Menasheh Klein wrote two harsh responsa regarding this custom being changed (3:147 and 4:206 – the second vol. 4). Even though there are some who act this way in America, it is largely not practiced in Israel. It is therefore not proper. Nonetheless, we should not argue over anything. They should ask their Rabbi and follow what he instructs them to do. When people ask me this question, I certainly tell them that they should act as everyone else. Sometimes, I am not asked and arrive to perform a wedding, and I see that each set of parents is walking their children down the aisle. I obviously do not say anything; it is not the time or the place. You should not argue about it, but you can recommend that they ask their Rabbi.

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