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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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Storing umbilical cord blood

Q: What is Ha-Rav's opinion regarding storing umbilical cord blood?

A: Collecting and banking umbilical cord blood is proven medicine and not nonsense. There are illnesses which can be cured by umbilical cord blood. At the same time, the chances of actually using this blood are quite low. I understand that this blood only lasts until the person reaches twenty years old, and the chances of being stricken with one of the illnesses before twenty is quite low. Perhaps you will say: What's the difference? It is worthwhile for someone to protect himself from even a low risk. While this is true, perhaps it is preferable to direct the money to other medicine advancements which have greater risks. We therefore suggest a compromise solution: instead of banking private umbilical cord blood which is costly, one should donate the blood to a communal bank which is free. As a result, the chances of someone benefiting from the blood are greater and he himself is more protected since he is part of a group. In sum, if you are already storing umbilical cord blood, give it to a communal bank.

"I did not light Yom Tov candles"

Q: The yahrzeit candle on Rosh Hashanah, which I was going to use to transfer fire, went out and I did not light Yom Tov candles on the second night of Rosh Hashanah. What should I do?

A: Since you intended to light candles and it was not your fault that you were unable, it is considered in heaven as if you did light them. If you want, you can light an extra candle on Yom Kippur, but you are not obligated to do so.

Earning a livelihood

Q: As it known, Hashem decrees a person's earnings for the year (Rosh Hashanah 16a). If this is so, will I gain anything from working extra hours?

A: Ha-Rav Yosef Albo asks this exact question in Sefer Ha-Ikarim (4:8) in the section which discusses Divine Providence. He asks: If Hashem decrees a person's yearly earnings, why should he toil? He gives three possibilities for Hashem's decree.

1. It is possible that Hashem decreed that you will find a treasure even if you do nothing all day long.
2. It is possible that Hashem decreed that you will find a treasure on condition that you search for it. Obviously, if you search and find the treasure, there is no relationship between the effort exerted in doing so and the worth of the treasure.
3. Or it is possible that Hashem decreed that your earnings will be proportional to the effort you exert.

Thus, there are three possibility and we do not know which Hashem has decreed for us. Therefore, we must exert ourselves. And this is indeed the conclusion of Ha-Rav Yosef Albo.

A pregnant woman fasting on Yom Kippur

Q: Must a pregnant woman fast on Yom Kippur?

A: Quite simply, everyone is obligated to fast on Yom Kippur, including a pregnant woman, unless a doctor rules that the mother or fetus is in danger. This question must be asked of a G-d-fearing doctor, since it is easier for an unobservant doctor to simply say: "Eat." What does it matter to him if he instructs her to eat? Therefore, one must ask a G-d-fearing doctor if the mother or the fetus is in danger. If the mother does not feel well, this is not a reason not to fast. She can lie in bed. It is more important not to eat than to attend shul. She can lie in an air-conditioned room the entire day. And if she has other children, others can help take care of them. But if she feels she is in danger or the doctor says she is in danger, she should eat.

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