



On the Air with Rav Aviner ~ #76

From Ha-Rav's weekly radio programs in Israel

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Ta'anit Esther for a mailman (from Ha-Rav's blog)

Q: Is a mailman who is walking all day in the sun exempt from fasting on Ta'anit Esther since there is a risk of dehydration? What about the other fasts?

A: He is obligated to fast on Ta'anit Esther. Although it is not as strict as the other fasts and the Halachah therefore says that there is a leniency on Ta'anit Esther that someone who has eye pains is exempt, all others who are healthy should not separate from the community (Rama, Orach Chaim 686.2). The Magen Avraham (#4) comments that even someone who is traveling and it is difficult for him to fast is obligated to do so. A mailman is similar to someone who is traveling. He is therefore obligated in all of the fasts. Obviously, if during the fast he feels in danger of dehydration, he has to drink a lot of water. But if he knows from the outset that if he works on a fast day he will need to drink, this is as if he made a condition that he would not fast. He cannot enter this situation and he needs to work it out such as switching shifts, taking a day off or distributing the mail slowly.

Gathering a minyan

Q: My husband passed away and we were at the cemetery. We only had nine men and my son did not say Kaddish. I told him that there were many people at the cemetery and there was no obligation to have them together and there was a minyan. What is Ha-Rav's opinion?

A: You are right and he is right. He is right: you need ten men. If the tenth person does not know what you are doing and is not joining you then he is not considered part of the minyan. But you are right that if there is a tenth man even though he is not right next to you, but he hears and answers the prayers and you signal to him, he is considered part of the minyan.

Microphone for Havdalah

Q: I am a singer and I sometimes perform a musical Havdalah with a microphone and band. Someone pointed out that I cannot use the microphone for Havdalah. A few days ago, I was at an event with a Chasidic Rebbe and he used a microphone for the Sheva Berachot. Was the person correct that I cannot use the microphone?

A: According to the majority of authorities, a person cannot fulfill his obligation by hearing through a microphone, since he is obligated to hear the sound of a person's voice and not the sound of an instrument. As is known, sound waves enter the microphone and go through a process of electronic changes, etc... As a result, a person does not hear the person voice through the microphone and cannot fulfill his obligation. Regarding Sheva Berachot, there is no personal obligation to hear them. It is sufficient for ten men to hear them and even without a microphone this would occur and it is thus permissible for Sheva Berachot. But every person must hear Havdalah. The difference is whether there is a personal obligation or not. For example, it is forbidden to use a microphone for reading the Megillah since everyone has an obligation to hear it. You should therefore not use the microphone for Havdalah.

Sperm Donation (from Rav Aviner's video blog)

Q: Is it permissible to donate to a sperm bank?

A: The problem with this is that the child will not know who his father is and he may then marry one of his relatives. Our Sages in the Gemara obviously did not discuss this issue but they spoke about something similar: It is forbidden for a man to marry different women in different countries (after divorces) out of a fear that his children may marry one another. It is therefore forbidden to donate to a sperm bank. When a couple wants to have an artificial insemination – which the majority of authorities permit – the solution is that the sperm come from a non-Jew, since then the relation is only through the mother and not the father.

Baal Teshuvah and a Kippah (from Rav Aviner's video blog)

Q: How should a "Baal Teshuvah" (a newly-repentant Jew) begin to wear a kippah? I have a lot of non-observant friends and I fear that they will make fun of me.

A: There are four approaches. 1. The In-Stages Approach – to occasionally wear a kippah, for 15 minutes a day, then a half an hour, an hour, etc... By beginning slowly, you will become accustomed to wearing it as will your friends. 2. The Attack Approach – to start wearing the kippah. If someone asks you about it, you can say: "I changed direction." 3. The Hidden Approach – Don't wear a kippah, wear a hat. 4. The Explanatory Approach – These are your friends. Say: "My friends, I have changed direction. I have become religious and I am wearing a kippah, but we will remain friends. I am not eradicating our world of values and there are many ideals which we share. I found my way and if you are interested, I will explain how this happened to me." Which course to choose is a personal decision.

Bat Mitzvah

Q: My wife wants to have an event for women only, and I want to have an event for the whole family. What is Ha-Rav's opinion?

A: There are no general principles for a Bat Mitzvah, just as there are also no general principles for a Bar Mitzvah. The Bar Mitzvah boy is called to the Torah nowadays, but not in the past. After the davening, they would give out some schnapps and cakes. They now have big affairs. We are not against such things, but we need to know that it is not obligatory. It is therefore a personal decision to have women only or to have men as well. If you have it with men it must obviously be modest. In any event, this is the Bat Mitzvah girl's celebration and it needs to be what she wants and not what we want. It needs to be something that she enjoys and something that brings her the most spiritual benefit.

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