



## On the Air with Rav Aviner ~ #81

From Ha-Rav's weekly radio program in Israel

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### Selling cigarettes

Q: As is known, smoking is forbidden according to Halachah. Is it permissible for a store owner to sell cigarettes? After all, if he does not do so, he will lose a lot of customers. And what about a worker who is not the owner, is it permissible for him to sell cigarettes?

A: Stores certainly should not sell cigarettes and there is no need to worry about losing business. This is not the only thing which attracts customers. One should not fear and sell items which kill people. Ten thousand people die every year in the State of Israel from smoking and hundreds of thousands are sick and suffer from smoking. Nonetheless, we give someone who does sell cigarettes the benefit of the doubt for various reasons:

1. If he does not sell them, others will. It is therefore not a violation of "Do not place a stumbling block before the blind" which is a Torah prohibition but a violation of "aiding someone who is committing a transgression" which is a Rabbinic prohibition.

2. Furthermore, since the customer is not smoking all of the cigarettes immediately upon purchase but at a later period, it is not considered "Do not place a stumbling block." This is similar to the halachah that it is forbidden to give food to someone who will not recite a blessing before eating. The halachic authorities ask: why doesn't the Halachah mention that it is forbidden to give food to someone who will not recite the Birkat Ha-Mazon, which is a Torah mitzvah (reciting a blessing before eating is a Rabbinic mitzvah)? Answer: The Birkat Ha-Mazon is recited at a later time.

3. There are some authorities who rule that the prohibition of "Do not place a stumbling block" does not apply in business.

4. There are also some authorities who say that that the prohibition of smoking does not apply to each and every cigarette but that smoking in general is a negative trait.

All of these reasons can be added together, and it is therefore impossible to throw stones at one who sells cigarettes. But if someone asks, tell him: Do not sell cigarettes and do not be concerned that on account of this you will not make a livelihood.

#### Shaving for Yom Ha-Atzmaut

Q: Is one obligated to shave before Yom Ha-Atzmaut (since there is a custom not to get a shave during the period of Sefirat Ha-Omer)?

A: Yes, just as one shaves all year long to honor Shabbat, it is a mitzvah to shave in honor of Yom Ha-Atzmaut. Obviously, if a person does not shave his beard at all, he does not do so, but if he generally does so for Shabbat, then he also shaves for Yom Ha-Atzmaut. The same applies to getting a haircut. I remember that some students once asked our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook, before Yom Ha-Atzmaut if it is permissible to shave for this day. Our Rabbi did not answer. Later he responded: "Tomorrow there will be an exam on your faces." On Yom Ha-Atzmaut he saw that some students had been strict with themselves and had not shaved. He said of them: "Their faces show their character" (Yeshayahu 3:9, i.e. they had not absorbed the true joy of the day). He added: When there is faith, there is joy and when there is joy there are no halachic doubts. How long will we speak out of both sides of our mouths (see Melachim 1 18:21)?! Do we believe in the Revealed Redemption or not?!"

Q: When should one get a haircut or shave since Erev Yom Ha-Atzmaut is Remembrance Day for the Fallen Soldiers of Tzahal?

A: One should do so a little bit before the holiday begins. For example, if Ma'ariv is at 7:00 PM, he should shave at 6:00 PM.

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