



On the Air with Rav Aviner ~ #82

From Ha-Rav's weekly radio program in Israel

Prepared by Rabbi Mordechai Friedfertig

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Standing in silence during the siren for fallen soldiers of Tzahal

Q: Is it permissible to stand in silence during the siren on Remembrance Day for fallen soldiers of Tzahal?

A: Some say that it is forbidden on account of "Chukot Ha-Goyim" (following the practices of the non-Jews). This is not "Chukot Ha-Goyim." The Tosafot (Avodah Zarah 11a) define "Chukot Ha-Goyim" as an act rooted in idol worship or devoid of meaning and the Maharik (#88) says that it has a taint of heresy. But it is permissible to do something which non-Jews do if it does not have roots in idol worship and is logical, such as doctors wearing white coats or wearing glasses. Standing in silence for fallen soldiers is therefore not considered "Chukot Ha-Goyim," since it is to honor them. Furthermore, there are no other nations in which the entire nation stands in silence for fallen soldiers.

Others claim that this act is "Bitul Torah" (taking time away from learning Torah). But there is no problem to think about Torah or learn Torah by heart related to the self-sacrifice during that time.

I once saw in the name of the Kabbalist, Ha-Rav Ashlag, that the siren has an aspect of wiping out the memory of Amalek similar to making noise upon hearing Haman's name. If this is so, then there is certainly no problem. It is difficult to agree or disagree since it is not clearly exact how this wipes out the memory of Amalek.

Regardless, the entire community stands in silence for the fallen soldiers and one should not separate himself from the community. There are certainly better paths in our traditions for remembering the deceased – learning mishnayot, reciting "Kel Maleh Rachamim," etc... – but here one should not separate from the community.

Hallel on Yom Ha-Atzmaut with a blessing

Q: Is it permissible to reciting Hallel on Yom Ha-Atzmaut with a blessing even though the Chief Rabbinate of Israel ruled that it should be recited without a blessing?

A: I heard with my own ears that the Chief Sefardic Rabbi of Israel, Ha-Rav Yitzchak Nissim, said that he once met with that a delegation from the Religious Kibbutzim. and they asked why the Chief Rabbinate ruled to recite Hallel without a blessing. He responded that in truth the Chief Rabbinate needed to do this in order to avoid increasing disputes amongst the Nation of Israel. It is better, he reasoned, that a majority recite Hallel without a blessing than a minority with a blessing; i.e. if we rule that Hallel should be recited with a blessing only a minority of the people will accept this ruling, whereas if we rule the opposite the majority will follow. The delegation then asked him. What about one who wants to recite it with a blessing? He responded. A blessing will come upon him. Ha-Rav Shlomo Goren also ruled that Hallel should be recited on this day with a blessing. Baruch Hashem – Blessed is Hashem, we therefore merit saying Hallel on Yom Ha-Atzmaut with a blessing.

Background music during Sefirat Ha-Omer

Q: What should a person do if there is background music playing at his work during Sefirat Ha-Omer?

A: He has no choice and he is not obligated to quit his job on account of this. It is called a "benefit which comes to a person against his will" (Pesachim 25b) or in simpler words: "an unintended act." He is not guilty if he hears, but he should not listen. There is a difference between hearing and listening. He may continue to work there.

Special thank you to Fred Casden for editing "On the Air"



Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim P.O.B. 1076 Jerusalem 91009 Tel.02-6284101 Fax.02-6261528

www.ateret.org.il To subscribe, send e-mail to: mororly@bezeqint.net

