



On the Air with Rav Aviner - #83

From Ha-Rav's weekly radio program in Israel

Prepared by Rabbi Mordechai Friedfertig

Visit our blog: www.ravaviner.com

Questions in this issue:

1. Mourning on Yom Ha-Atzmaut
2. "Igrot Kodesh" ("Holy Letters") of the Lubavitcher Rebbe
3. Learning Torah for the sick
4. Yizkor without a minyan

Mourning on Yom Ha-Atzmaut

Q: Why doesn't Yom Ha-Atzmaut cancel out the mourning practices of "shiva"? While it is not a Torah-ordained holiday, it is known that when there is a conflict between personal mourning and communal joy of Klal Yisrael – the joy of Klal Yisrael takes precedence.

A: Regarding its laws, Yom Ha-Atzmaut is like Chanukah and Purim. But regarding the laws of mourning, the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 696:4) states that Chanukah does not override the laws of mourning, while Purim partially overrides the laws of mourning. The reason for this is that Purim is a decree of the Prophets, while Chanukah is a Rabbinic decree. Since Yom Ha-Atzmaut is also a Rabbinic decree, it is similar to Chanukah and does not override the laws of mourning.

"Igrot Kodesh" ("Holy Letters") of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Q: When some Chabad Chasidim have a question, they open the Rebbe's collection of letters and find the answer on that page. Isn't this prohibited on account of

"consulting the dead" (Devarim 18:11) or "Do not engage in sorcery" (Vayikra 19:26)?

A. The commentators of the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 179:4) mention that it is permissible to open a holy book and find an answer, and this is even called a "minor prophecy" (see Shach *ibid.*). This means that there is no prohibition. There is a similar method of opening the Tanach, and locating verses which answer particular questions. This is called "Goral Ha-Gra" – the lottery of the Vilna Gaon. There is the famous story about the Tzadik of Jerusalem – Reb Aryeh Levin – in which he used the "Goral Ha-Gra. During the Israeli War of Independence, a group of thirty-five soldiers was sent to provide additional defense for the Gush Etzion Settlements. All in the group were tragically killed. After the war, the bodies were discovered but the Chief Rabbinate of Israel was unable to identify twelve of the corpses. Reb Aryeh Levin used the Goral Ha-Gra – which involves using a particular format of the Chumash, flipping the pages back and forth until eventually a particular verse is chosen. In each case, the verse chosen clearly identified a fallen soldier with a particular body (See "A Tzaddik in Our Time: The Life of Rabbi Aryeh Levin," pp. 111-117). The "Goral Ha-Gra" was also used by Ha-Rav Aharon Kotler when he wanted to immigrate to Israel from Russia, but Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein was greatly urging him to come to America in order to strengthen Judaism there. The verse which came out in the "Goral" was "Hashem said to Aharon. Go meet Moshe in the desert" (Shmot 4:27). He understood this to mean: "Hashem said to Aharon" – this was a hint to his name Ha-Rav Aharon Kotler. "Go meet Moshe in the desert" – Go meet Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein who is in the spiritually desolate desert of America. Ha-Rav Kotler indeed went to America and established the yeshiva in Lakewood, New Jersey, one of the largest yeshivot in the world today (see the book "Ha-Gaon," p. 1118 by Ha-Rav Dov Eliach). There is therefore no prohibition in acting this way, but that does not mean that it will work. Reb Aryeh Levin and Ha-Rav Aharon Kotler were Torah giants and holy individuals. It depends on who performs it. It is possible to ask any question in the world through the "Igroh Kodesh" but that does not mean that everyone will receive a true answer. Although this is a minor prophecy, not everyone is suited to receive it. Therefore, someone who acts this way does not perform a transgression, but this is not the way of the Torah. If you want to know the answer to a question you have to exert effort or take counsel with a Torah scholar.

Learning Torah for the sick

Q: Is there something else I can do for a sick person along with praying?

A. Ha-Rav Chaim of Volozhin in his commentary on Pirkei Avot (1:1), "Ruach Chaim," relates that a woman once yelled at the Taz: "My master, my son is going to die!" The Taz responded to her: "Am I in place of G-d?" She said: "I am yelling at the Torah within you, since The Holy One Blessed Be He and the Torah are one." He said: "This is what I will do. I will give the Torah learning which I am engaged in now as a present to your son, and perhaps he will live in its merit, as it says (Devarim 32): 'You will lengthen [your] days through this thing (the Torah).'" At that moment, the child's fever dropped. We can therefore learn Torah for the recovery of the sick.

Yizkor without a minyan

Q: Is a woman obligated to go to shul to recite Yizkor or is it permissible to say it alone at home?

A: She may recite it alone at home. It is her choice.

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

