



On the Air with Rav Aviner ~ #89

From Ha-Rav's weekly radio program in Israel

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Listening to Music

Q: What types of songs are permissible to listen to?

A: There are three conditions which must be met in order to listen to music: kosher words, a kosher tune and a kosher singer.

1. K kosher Words – The Rambam explains in his commentary on the Mishnah (Pirkei Avot 1:17) that the words of a song need to be kosher. Anything which is forbidden to say is also forbidden to sing. If something is Lashon Ha-Ra, corrupt or immodest it does not become kosher because it is sung. It may even be worse when sung since when we speak, we say something and it is over, but when we sing, the song repeats and repeats. He says that the language of the song is unimportant. Hebrew or Arabic, or even English, the essence is that the words be kosher.
2. K kosher Tune – The Rambam mentions this factor in his letter to the Sages of Aram Zova (edition of Ha-Rav Yitzchak Shilat, p. 428). He says that some tunes act upon one's soul, others stir up violence, others awaken all types of inclinations, etc. If the tune entices negative inclinations it is forbidden, but if it spiritual repairs a person it

is permissible. In order to know if the tune is kosher you can look at how the body moves when one listens to it.

3. Kosher Singer – Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein discusses this idea in Shut Igrot Moshe (Even Ha-Ezer #96) that when people listen to songs or sing someone's songs, they give honor and respect to the singer. If the singer is a sinner, we do not want to provide him with honor and respect. A singer is like an educator – it is not just a technical skill but a spiritual one. I am not discussing what "Sefer Ha-Kuzari" says that a singer is like a Levi in the Temple. We do not have the Temple or Levi'im (with certain genealogy). What is a kosher singer? A Jew who keeps the 613 mitzvot or a non-Jew who keeps the seven mitzvot incumbent upon non-Jews.

Tzitzit directly on the body

Q: Is it permissible to wear Tzitzit directly on the body or is it necessary to wear an undershirt under the Tzitzit?

A: There is no prohibition which forbids wearing the Tzitzit directly on the body. One must only be careful for the Tzitzit not to be stuck in filthy place.

Cell phone ring during the Three Weeks

Q: When I hear music as the ring from someone's cell phone during the Three Weeks, should I tell him to change it to a regular ring?

A: You cannot give someone else orders. You should certainly change your ring to a regular ring if you have a musical ring. His musical ring is not so bad since it is short and you hear it, but you are not listening to it. In Halachah, this is not called listening to music, but a benefit that comes to a person against his will (Pesachim 25). It is therefore no problem.

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