



## On the Air with Rav Aviner - #92

From Ha-Rav's weekly radio program in Israel

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Birthday party on night of Shiva Asar Be-Tammuz – Part 2

### Response from Ha-Rav Aharon Ziegler

In last week's parashah sheet – On the Air #91 – Rav Aviner was asked if it is permissible to celebrate a birthday party for a girl on the night of Shiva Asar Be-Tammuz. Based on a Teshuvah of Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein (Shut Igrot Moshe, Orach Chaim 1:168), he answered that while it is not preferable, it is not forbidden.

We received the following response from Ha-Rav Aharon Ziegler (author of "Halakhic Positions of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik" vol. 1, 2, 3 and 4):

Regarding the question of a party on the night of Shiva Asar Be-Tamuz, my Rebbe, Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik zt"l, felt that every Ta'anit (fast) has an element of Aveilut (mourning) (except Yom Kippur), with it. Therefore, although the actual "fasting" begins in the morning, the Aveilut part begins the night before. He cited the Gemara Ta'anit that discusses reciting "Aneinu" (a prayer recited on fast days) for Ma'ariv,

although we are still permitted to eat. He therefore felt that the Aveilut of the "Bein Ha-Metzarim" (The Three Weeks) begins at night and a party would not be appropriate.

### Monopoly on Shabbat

Q: Is it permissible to play monopoly on Shabbat?

A: It is permissible, since they are not real transactions, it is not real money and people do not usually record scores during the game.

### Non-Jewish methods for perfecting character traits

Q: Is it permissible to use methods from non-Jews for perfecting our character traits?

A: On the face of it, it is permissible to learn wisdom from non-Jews, such as physics and mathematics but not ethical matters or those relating to serving Hashem. We see, however, that our great Rabbis did not stop from taking good ideas from non-Jews in the area of perfecting character traits after verifying that they fit within the Torah's view. In the Gemara in Berachot (8b), Rabban Gamliel says: I admire the Persians for three things -- their modesty in eating, the bathroom (they had latrines in which the excrement falls along an incline, away from the person) and in relations. And in the Gemara in Sanhedrin (39b), Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi points out a contradiction between two verses from the prophet Yechezkel. He says in one place (5:7): "And you did not perform the laws of the non-Jews who surround you" while he says in another place (11:12): "And you performed the laws of the non-Jews who surround you." He resolves the contradiction that we did not perform the good things they did, but you did perform the bad things they did. The book "Chovot Ha-Levavot" takes from Arab philosophers. The book "Cheshbon Ha-Nefesh" by Rabbi Menachem Mendel Lapin of Satnov – to whom Rabbi Yisrael Salanter wrote a glowing recommendation and which was learned in Lithunian Yeshivot – was based on a book by Benjamin Franklin. There were obviously changes, purifications and "conversion" of the ideas. The Rambam in Shemoneh Perakim (introduction to Pirkei Avot) takes from Aristotle and says: Accept truth from one who says it. We obviously do not say about Aristotle: Get yourself a Rav (Pirkei Avot 1:6, 16). But if he says something correct, it is permissible to take it from him. Based on this idea of the Rambam, the author of the "Torah Temimah," in his Torah commentary "Tosefet Beracha," collects twenty-four examples in the Torah, among our Sages and great

Rabbis where we learn from non-Jews (Bemidbar 24:5). We therefore see that it is permissible to learn good things from non-Jews in this area. After all, Yitro taught Moshe Rabbenu how to organize the court system. But we need to check very carefully if these ideas fit with the Torah. People say that the Rambam "converted" Aristotle. He took part of Aristotle's teaching and threw some in the garbage. He upset everyone. The followers of Aristotle were angry because he threw some in the garbage and he upset the Jews because he took some. Therefore, not everyone can decide what is acceptable and what is not, but in theory it is possible.

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