



## On the Air with Rav Aviner - #110

From Ha-Rav's weekly radio program in Israel and more

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### Life on other planets

Q: Is there life on only planets?

A: The Rambam in his letter to the Sages of Marseilles wrote that there are three ways to investigate an issue: through prophetic revelation, intellect and experience (Igrot Ha-Rambam, Rav Shilat Edition, p. 479). Regarding our question, nothing is explicitly written either way in the Torah or Prophets. This is not surprising since the Torah is not a science book, but a guide for what is right and wrong. In order to understand reality, we have scientific intellect, which is also a Divine gift, and there is even a blessing upon seeing a great scientist: Blessed is Hashem...who gave of His wisdom to flesh and blood (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 224:7). We are not opposed to the concept of life on other planets, as Rabbi Chasdai Crescas mentioned at the end of his book "Or Hashem," but we do not have any conclusive scientific proof. We are therefore left with experience.

It is amazing that over the last fifty years people have been talking about aliens. Hundreds of thousands of people have testified that they saw an alien or spaceship, but there has still not been a scientific declaration that they exist. Why is this so? No museum possesses an alien or spaceship to investigate. There is a basic scientific

principle that any assumption must be examined and analyzed to prove or disprove it. Committees have been established to investigate eyewitness claims, and all of them been explained in some fashion: a plane, missile, meteorological air balloon, helicopter in fog, secret military devices, shooting star, low clouds, etc... Science does not accept anything without proof but it also does not reject anything without proof. Over fifty years of investigations and there is no decisive proof either way, but the field of science-fiction literature is booming.

We must remember that the Torah is not a science book. Whether there are aliens is not the subject of the Torah. Our subject is how man needs to act in this world. Science comes to describe the world. The Torah does not come to describe what is, but what should be. The Torah does not come to describe if there is life on other planets, but how to have a pure soul and to be a holy and righteous person on this planet (Maharal in Netivot Olam – Netiv Ha-Torah, Netiv 14).

#### Free bus ride

Q: A friend of mine is a bus driver. He won't take money for the fare. Is this stealing?

A: It seems like stealing unless there is a dispensation for drivers to allow their friends to ride free, but I have not heard that such a thing exists. You therefore have to insist that you pay. If he won't take it, punch your own card or rips a hole in that ride. You can also count the free rides and throw your bus pass away when you have that many rides left. It is preferable, however, to tell him that you do not want to ride for free. You can say: "I asked a Rabbi and he said it is forbidden. What can I do? – Rabbis say everything is forbidden."

Q: Do I need to report him?

A: The basic law is that you have to report him based on the law of "Do not stand by idly over your brother's blood," which also applies to saving another from financial damage. But if you report him, it will be the end of him, I therefore recommend talking to him and telling him that it is not proper what he is doing, and a Rabbi told you that you have to report him if he does not stop.

### Text Message Responsa

Ha-Rav answers hundreds of text message questions a week. Some appear in the parashah sheets "Ma'ayanei Ha-Yeshu'ah," "Olam Ha-Katan" and "Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah." Here's a sample:

Q: How can you tell the difference between an obligation and proper behavior in the Shulchan Aruch?

A: Sometimes Rabbi Yosef Karo points it out and sometimes the commentaries point it out.

Q: Is "Mayim Acharonim" an obligation?

A: If one's hands are dirty.

Q: Is it permissible to drink coffee made by a non-Jew in Kosher utensils?

A: Yes, there is no prohibition of "Bishul Akum" (food cooked by a non-Jew) for coffee since it is mostly water and there is no problem with the water since it can be drunk without being cooked.

Q: Is "Get yourself a Rav" an obligation?

A: It is not an obligation and it is permissible to ask questions to various Rabbis, but to truly grow in Torah and fear of G-d, this is the way.

Q: Is it permissible to say "Amen" without a Kippah? What is a Kippah all about?

A: One should not daven without a Kippah or say "Amen" without a Kippah. The whole idea of the Kippah is to instill holiness and awe of heaven.

Q: How do I convince someone that the Torah is from heaven?

A: Only with something by which you yourself are convinced.

Q: Is it permissible to be drafted into the police although then will be issues of violating Shabbat?

A: It is permissible and a mitzvah. Be in connection with a Rav there.

Q: Is a person's soul his intellect?

A: The soul resides there.

Q: What should I do if I am angry?

A: Count to 10.

Q: What if it doesn't help?

A: Count to 100.

Q: People are always speaking Lashon Ha-Ra about me. What should I do?

A: Be the type of person that even if people speak Lashon Ha-Ra about you, no one will believe it.

Q: Is it permissible to daven with musical instruments?

A: Certainly not. We should daven as Jews have done over the generations.

Q: But they played instruments in the Temple?

A: We are not in the Temple.

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



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