



On the Air with Rav Aviner - #117

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

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Honoring Rabbis

Q: When I heard Rabbis speaking harshly about other Rabbis, my esteem for them goes down. How do I sustain my "Emunat Chachamim" – faith in our Sages?

A: The answer is a story told in the book "Keter Shem Tov" about the Ba'al Shem Tov, founder of the Chasidic movement, and his fierce opponent, Rabbi Nachman of Horodneko, who would constantly criticize him. One time that same Rabbi heard his students speaking against the Ba'al Shem Tov, and he castigated them, saying, "How dare you speak that way against a holy man!" They responded, "But you yourself spoke out against him." He then replied with exceeding severity, "The way that is permissible for me to speak is not permissible for you." He then told a story of two craftsmen who worked together for twenty years in order to fashion the king's crown. In the end, when the time came to set the diamonds in the crown, one said it should be one way and the other countered that it should be another. The argument grew in intensity until one craftsman called the other an idiot. A passerby who witnessed the argument injected his own words and called the man an idiot as well. The first craftsman, who had called the other an idiot, then said, "Are you aware that we are friends and that we have worked together for twenty years, making the king's crown? Our lives depend on this last detail,

and that is why we are expressing ourselves so sharply. But you! Have you lifted even a finger for the king's crown? Have you ever in your life seen the king? YOU are the idiot!"

Based on this idea, our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah, honored every Torah scholar, even he if he disagreed with him, and he instructed his students to act in the same manner. When he heard a student repeat an expression which he himself had used disagreeing with another Torah scholar, he chastised him: "That which is permissible to me is not permissible to you." Occasionally when he thought that a Torah scholar erred, he spoke harshly, but on subject and with respect.

And this is how Rabbis have acted throughout the generations. For example, Ha-Rav Aharon Kotler, Rosh Yeshiva of Beit Midrash Gavoha in Lakewood, fiercely disagreed with the Satmar Rebbe, Ha-Rav Yoel Teitelbaum, but he said: "The Satmar Rav and I do not have the same approach – both in Torah learning and in political matters - but he is a giant in Torah and a giant in proper character traits." We have also heard that Ha-Rav Yaakov Kaminetzky, Rosh Yeshiva of Torah Va-Da'at, said that that despite the differences that existed between the Yeshiva world and Ha-Rav Joseph Soloveitchik anyone who refers to him by his initials "JB" (as many did and still do) will have to give a Divine accounting in the future.

Therefore, even when Torah scholars argue over Halachah, which is called "Milchama Shel Torah" – the War of Torah (Megillah 15b), we - the insignificant - must stand in fear and awe and honor them all.

Birkat Ha-Mazon when not full

Q: Does one recite Birkat Ha-Mazon if I am still hungry because I am dieting?

A: Yes, one needs to recite Birkat Ha-Mazon even when hungry. Even though the Torah states: "And you shall eat, be satisfied and bless" (Devarim 8:10), the Rabbis established that even when you eat the amount of a "Kezayit" (volume of an olive), which is the size of a matchbox, one recites Birkat Ha-Mazon (Berachot 45a).

Text Message Responsa

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

Q: Is it permissible to set up non-religious Jews for the purpose of marriage?

A: Yes. It saves them from sin and allows them to fulfill many mitzvot.

Q: If I wear a skirt down to the floor, do I have to wear socks?

A: No.

Q: Does a younger sister have to wait for her older sister to get married before her?

A: Not in our times.

Q: If someone loses his wedding ring, is it a sign that he must repent in some way?

A: No.

Q: Can an Ashkenazi ask a Sefardic Rabbi a question?

A: If he tells the Rabbi that he is Ashkenazi.

Q: Is it permissible to go to the circus?

A: No, it is immodest and there are other problems. See Avodah Zarah 18b.

Q: What is the value of an organ donor card if the family makes the final decision anyway?

A: It has a major influence on their decision.

SPECIAL SMS Q&A ON CHOOSING NAMES

Q: Does a name influence a person's character?

A: No. Yishmael (May G-d hear) is a beautiful name but he was evil. And the opposite also exists. The deciding factor is the free choice of a person.

Q: If a person has problems in his life should he change his name?

A: It is written that only in the case where a person is extremely ill should he change his name (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 335:10).

Q: Is it permissible to give more than one name?

A: One name, two or three – it doesn't matter.

Q: Should one consult with a Rabbi for choosing a name?

A: No. People did not consult with Rabbis as much in previous generations as they do today. And anyway, the Arizal says that when the parents give the child a name, they have a spark of "Ruach Ha-Kodesh" (Holy, Divine spirit).

Q: Does a name influence a person's fate?

A: No. When our Sages state that one can change an evil decree by changing his name is explained by the Rambam (Hilchot Teshuvah 2:4) that if he repents in a serious way, he changes his name. This means, "I seriously repented and I am no longer the same person." This certainly changes the decree of a person. Rabbenu Nissim - The Ran – has the opposite approach (Rosh Hashanah 3b in the pages of the Rif). He said that if I change my name and every time I mention the new name, it inspires me to repent, I can change my situation. The essence of changing one's name is not a trick. The point is to say: I am not the same person, I am someone new.

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