



On the Air with Rav Aviner - #119

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

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[Same editor but new Hebrew name!]

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Mention of the World to Come in the Torah

Q: Why doesn't the Torah explicitly mention the World to Come?

A: Maran Ha-Rav Kook says in his book Orot Ha-Torah (5, 8) that man has a propensity for lofty spiritual matters. If we discuss the World to Come too much, people will dream about it and abandon this world, and as a result will not merit life in the World to Come. But it certainly needs to be mentioned, and it is therefore mentioned in hints. Only afterwards, when groups such as the Tzedukkim, who did not believe in the World to Come, arose within the Nation, did our Rabbis need to emphasize this matter in order to bring it into proper perspective. The way of the

Torah is not to discuss broad theological issues but to leave them as basic principles. However, when these principles are challenged, they have to be explicitly discussed. And this is what our Sages did. We must therefore exert our effort in this world and not focus too much on the World to Come.

Studying secular subjects on Shabbat

Q: Is it permissible to study secular subjects on Shabbat?

A: This is a dispute between the Rishonim. The Rambam wrote in his commentary on the Mishnah (Shabbat chap. 23 and quote in the Beit Yosef Orach Chaim 307) that it is forbidden to read books of wisdom, which are not Torah, on Shabbat and Yom Tov. This is interesting since the Rambam is usually thought to be the authorities most open to general wisdom. But according to the Ramban (Beit Yosef ibid.), it is permissible to read medical books since they contain wisdom. These two opinions are quoted in the Shulchan Aruch (ibid. #17): "It is forbidden to study on Shabbat and Yom Tov aside from words of Torah, and even books of wisdom are forbidden, and there is an opinion which permits it." The Mishnah Berurah (380:65) indicated that we act leniently but it is proper to be strict. The basic halachah is therefore that it is permissible to learn secular subjects on Shabbat but it is certainly proper to be strict. If one follows the permissible view, it includes school reading or studying for a test on the condition that one enjoys it. If such activities cause stress and fear over a test, one should refrain from studying.

It is related that the Rama once quoted a thought from Aristotle in one of his Teshuvot, and the Meharshal was upset that instead of learning Torah he learned Aristotle. The Rama responded that he was free from transgression, and even

though he brought a quote from Aristotle, heaven and earth can testify that he did not learn any of his books. On Shabbat, when others were taking walks, he would learn Moreh Nevuchim and books about nature, and he saw the thought from Aristotle there. During the week, he only learned Gemara and Halachah (Shut Ha-Rama #7). We therefore see that instead of taking a stroll on Shabbat afternoon, the Rama strolled in books about nature.

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 give a child a name with Hashem's Name in it?

A: It is permissible. When we call a child "Michael" we do not mean to say "Mi Ca-El" (Who is like Hashem).

Q: Is it permissible to think about Hashem in the bathroom?

A: No, but it is permissible to believe in Him there. Chochmat Shlomo, Orach Chaim 46.

Q: Is it permissible to hang up pictures of Rabbis in kids' room where there may be diapers?

A: Yes.

Q: Who decides when there are differences of opinions between parents?

A: They should work it out together.

Q: Without asking me, my friends asked a kabbalist about me and he said I should change my name. Am I obligated to do so?

A: Certainly not! In general, changing a name only has value when accompanied by serious repentance. Rambam. Ron.

Q: Which acts should I perform to sanctify Hashem's Name?

A: Ethical ones. Rambam, Yesodei Ha-Torah 5:11.

Q: Is it permissible to visit the Israel Museum which is open on Shabbat but has free entrance?

A: It is forbidden because its operation involves desecration of Shabbat.

Q: Should we organize an "Amen Meal" for the benefit of a sick person?

A: Give the money to Tzedakah.

Q: Is the story of the Maharal of Prague making a Golem true?

A: There is no documentation; it is a popular tradition.

Q: How does one overcome jealousy?

A: Read what is written in chap. 11 of Mesillat Yesharim.

Q: Is it permissible to read the horoscope in the newspaper?

A: It is forbidden and nonsense.

Q: Is it permissible to use dental floss on Shabbat?

A: If it is pre-ripped and on condition that it does not cause bleeding.

Q: What is the source of the Chamsa?

A: Superstition among the Arabs.

Q: Is it permissible to have a tongue ring?

A: It is forbidden because of "Chukot Ha-Goyim" – imitating non-Jewish practices.

Q: Why do we have to be "Shomer Negia" (it is forbidden for men and women to touch)? It is difficult.

A: This wonderful connection is saved for marriage. In general, it is difficult to follow the Torah, but worthwhile.

Q: Is it permissible to go to a bar or pub?

A: It is certainly forbidden because of the prohibition of men and women mingling, "Moshav Leitzim" (frivolity) and drinking, which is improper behavior.

Q: My father is arguing with my grandfather, and my father wants me to sever all contact with my grandfather. Should I listen?

A: If it is not really justifiable, you should continue your relationship with your grandfather. If a father instructs his son to commit a transgression he is not to be obeyed, and to hate a fellow Jew and not speak to him is a transgression; and this applies all the more so to one's grandfather. But try to continue your relationship with your grandfather secretly. Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 143:11.

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