



On the Air with Rav Aviner – #130

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

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Herzl and Zionism

Q: It is known that Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Kook hung a picture of Herzl in his home. But I have heard that Herzl wrote horrible things about Judaism in his diary. How do these two things go together? And if Herzl and Secular Zionist are so opposed to Judaism, why are we called "Religious-Zionists"?

A: There are two questions here: on Herzl and on Zionism. Regarding Herzl, one must be extremely careful about spreading lies. All the negative things written about Herzl are incorrect and half-quotes. See the new book "Herzl: A New Reading" by Dr. Yitzchak Weiss which discusses all of these issues. One can find the true Herzl there.

Regarding, Zionism, it is not the creation of Herzl, it is the creation of the Master of the Universe. The definition of Zionism is the return to Zion, the building of our Land and the revival of our Nation in our Land. The entire Torah, all of the prophets and all of our Sages

clearly state this idea. Zionism was true before Herzl and after Herzl, and even without Herzl, and although he was not religious, he awakened this idea. This can be compared to secular Jews encouraging performance of a kindness. Just because people who were not religious encouraged this idea, we would not perform the kindness?!

Nevertheless, the fact that people defame Herzl regarding Zionism is a good sign, since there is no connection between the two things. When people make claims having nothing to do with the issue, it is a sign that they have nothing to say about the issue itself. We must therefore certainly join in the revival and unification of our Nation in our Land.

Purchases during Sefirat Ha-Omer

Q: Is it permissible to receive something I ordered for my house during Sefirat Ha-Omer?

A: The issue during Sefirat Ha-Omer is not buying new items, but reciting the blessing of "Shehechyanu." This is not a good time of the year (since 24,000 of Rabbi Akiva's students died during this period), how then can one say "Blessed is Hashem...Who has granted us life, sustains us and has brought us to this time"? Who is happy during this time? The Shulchan Aruch does not mention the practice of not reciting "Shehechyanu" during Sefirat Ha-Omer, but mentions not reciting it during the period of "Bein Ha-Mitzarim" (the Three Weeks before Tisha Be-Av) (Shulchan Aruch, Aruch Chaim 551:17). Righteous people have the custom not to recite "Shehechyanu" during the Three Weeks, but this practice did not transfer to the period of Sefirat Ha-Omer. We therefore have a double stricture: 1. During the Three Weeks, this practice is not obligatory, but an act of piety. 2. It is mentioned in the Shulchan Aruch during the Three Weeks, but not during Sefirat Ha-Omer. It was only mentioned by later authorities. Nonetheless, it is not even a question in our case, since you are buying items for your home. When you buy items for a group – such as for you, your husband and your children – you do not recite the blessing of "Shehechyanu," but the blessing of "Ha-Tov Ve-Ha-Meitiv" (Hashem is good to me and does good for others). This means that it is not that there is a question and this is the answer, but there is no question at all.

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: My health clinic recommends that I receive immunization against Swine Flu. As is known, there is a lack of information regarding the side effects, and there are doctors who oppose it.

A: Nonsense. Besides a few, all of the doctors in Israel, as well as in Europe and America, recommend it, include the World Health Organization. And we follow the majority (see Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 618:1-4).

Q: Under what conditions is it permissible to use Homeopathic medicine?

A: Since it is not useful, only as a supplement and not a substitute (Shut She'eilat Shlomo 3:337).

Q: Is it permissible for a girl to daven in pants?

A: It is forbidden, but worse is not to daven at all. We do not say to a person who is transgressing to violate another mitzvah. Igeret Kiddush Hashem of the Rambam.

Q: Is it permissible to be a lawyer since the laws do not follow the Torah?

A: Yes. It is the way to help the exploited (She'al Na p. 148).

Q: Should a Brit Milah scheduled for Shabbat be postponed if the entire family will drive to get there?

A: It should be postponed. Yalkut Yosef (vol. Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 260:171).

Q: Is it forbidden to use light drugs? What is the source?

A: There is no such thing as light drugs. They are all heavy, forbidden by the law, punishable by jail time, and forbidden according to the Halachah. Rambam, Deot chap. 4 (Shut Igrot Moshe Yoreh Deah 3:35).

Q: If I immerse in a mikveh every day will I merit life in the World to Come?

A: With repentance.

Q: Should I recite Shehechyanu on new shoes?

A: Yes. But we do not say: "You should wear them out and get new ones" (Rama Orach Chaim 223:6).

Q: We met with the purpose of getting married and we acted inappropriately. What should we do?

A: Only meet in public places where there are many people.

Q: Is it permissible to write on my hand as a reminder to do something, or is it considered a tattoo?

A: It is permissible. It is not deep and it is temporary (Minchat Chinuch mitzvah 253).

Q: If a person overcomes his inclination and does not transgress, does he receive a reward?

A: Certainly. He sits and is not sinning... (see introduction to Sefer Ha-Chinuch. Introduction to Shelah).

- Q: If a person eats and vomits is he obligated to recite Birchat Ha-Mazon?
 A: No, only if he digests (Shut Har Tzvi Orach Chaim #163).
- Q: If someone grows a beard during a period of mourning or the Three Weeks, can he continue to grow it afterwards?
 A: Yes, there is no problem.
- Q: Is it permissible to use a pocketknife with scissors on Shabbat?
 A: Yes, it is one item. Shemirat Shabbat Ke-Hilchata (chap. 20).
- Q: Must one refrain from touching his grandmother?
 A: No. She is like a mother (Beit Shmuel on Even Ha-Ezer 21.14).
- Q: Should I stay at a job which is not good for me?
 A: Until you find another one (Rabbi Avraham ben Ha-Rambam, Ha-Maspik Le-Oved Hashem).
- Q: Is it obligatory to give Maaser Kesafim?
 A: It is obligatory based on a person's ability (Chafetz Chaim, end of Ahavat Chesed).
- Q: Is it permissible for me to participate in a davening where women lead certain parts and read from the Torah, and if I do not attend people will be offended?
 A: Certainly not. This will lend legitimacy. And they do not have a monopoly on being offended. They will be offended if you do not participate and you are offended by what they are doing. You therefore should not coerce them and they should not coerce you (Gittin 61a).
- Q: My grandmother has a Philippine aide. Can she accompany her to shul?
 A: Yes, but without wearing a cross (Shut Har Tzvi Orach Chaim 1:85. Shut She'eilat Shlomo 1:95).
- Q: I do not believe that the Redemption will arrive today, since there are so many things to repair in the world, and when we fix them, it will arrive. Is this idea heretical?
 A: The Redemption comes slowly and it has already begun. But a miracle is still possible (Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah vol. 1 p. 292).
- Q: Is one required according to the Halachah to wear a seatbelt?
 A: One is obligated according to the Halachah and the law (see Shut She'eilat Shlomo 2:414).
- Q: But Hashem protects...
 A: Hashem punishes those who are stupid. Mesilat Yesharim, chap. 9. This is a nonsensical – and dangerous – claim.

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