



Parashat Vayechi - #311

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Hilchot Asara Be-Tevet which Falls on Friday

Q: Is it possible for a fast day to fall on a Friday?

A: Asara Be-Tevet is the only one. Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 428, 550.

Q: Is it permissible to eat before Alot Ha-Shachar?

A: Yes, if one made such a condition before going to sleep, and it is sufficient to think it (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 564:1. Mishnah Berurah #3. Sha'ar Ha-Tziyun #3).

Q: It is permissible to brush one's teeth?

A: Yes (Shut Minchat Yitzchak 4:109. Yalkut Yosef – Moadim, p. 534).

Q: To bathe?

A: Even one who is strict not to bathe on Asara Be-Tevet may do so when it falls on Friday in honor of Shabbat (Mishnah Berurah 550:6. Shut Yechaveh Daat 5:41).

Q: Can someone who is not fasting serve as Shaliach Tzibur?

A: No. Shulchan Aruch 566:2.

Q: Is there a Minhag to give Tzedakah?

A: Yes. The reward of a fast is the Tzedakah given. Berachot 6b. And there are those who give the amount of food they would have eaten. Mishnah Berurah 566:12.

Q: Is it permissible to taste the food in honor of Shabbat if there is a concern that the taste will be spoiled?

A: Taste a tiny amount and spit it out. Rama, Orach Chaim 557:1. Mishnah Berurah #6.

Q: Should one also put on Talit and Tefillin at Minchah?

A: The majority do not put on Tefillin at Minchah. Sha'arei Teshuvah 34:2, 37:1. Biur Halachah 37 d.h. Be-Sha'at. Regarding Talit, there is no problem to do so.

Q: If the community Davens after sundown, do they still read the Torah reading of Vayechal and say Anenu in the Shemoneh Esrei?

A: Yes. But they should take care to Daven before sundown since there is a belittling of the honor of Shabbat in doing so (Shut Dvar Yehoshua 3:63. Piskei Teshuvot 550:10).

Q: Do we recite Birchat Cohanim at Minchah (in Eretz Yisrael)?

A: Some say in the name of the Chazon Ish that a Cohain who is fasting recites Birchat Cohanim even at Minchah Gedolah, and this is how they act in his Beit Midrash in Bnei Brak (Kehilat Yaakov Bereachot #29. Maaseh Ish Vol. 2, p. 98), and some also follow his ruling in other places (Moadim Uzmanim 7:248). But this is an innovation. In general, we only recite Birchat Cohanim at Minchah Ketana (Shut Shevet Ha-Levi 8:23. Hilchot Shlomo, Chapter 10 note 21). And some say only after Pelag Ha-Minchah (Luach Eretz Yisrael). See Piskei Teshuvot (128:1) and Ishei Yisrael (Chapter 27 note #116).

Q: Do we recite Vidui and Tachanun at Minchah?

A: No (Mishnah Berurah 550:11). And the same is true of Avinu Malchenu (Mishnah Berurah 602:3), and some Sefaradim recite Avinu Malchenu skipping the parts which mention sin (see Shut Yechaveh Daat 1:54. Piskei Teshuvot 550 note #37).

Q: When does the fast end?

A: After three medium size stars have come out on Shabbat. Rama, Orach Chaim 249:4.

In the News...

Prominent Dati Leumi Poskim Support PM's Policy on Iran

[www.theyeshivaworld.com/news/headlines-breaking-stories/204720/prominent-dati-leumi-poskim-support-pms-policy-on-iran.html]

Two prominent Poskim from the Dati Leumi community, Rabbi Tzvi Tau Shlit"a and Rabbi Shlomo Aviner Shlit"a have sent a letter of Chizuk (encouragement) to Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu regarding his tenacious policy vis-à-vis Iran and its nuclear program.

In light of the deal between Tehran and Western nations achieved in Geneva, pressure on the Prime Minister mounts amid US disdain for Jerusalem's so-called hard-line position.

The two comment on and support the Prime Minister's position, which they feel is the correct one in light of the existential threat posed by Iran and its nuclear aspirations.

Rav Aviner on...

The Ten Commandments

for Those Who Ask Rabbis Questions on Call-in Shows

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Vayigash 5774 – Translated by R. Blumberg-
Collated by Rabbi Mordechai Tzion from the practices of Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner Shlit"a during his call-in radio program]

1. Proper behavior precedes Torah.

Please don't call from a place where there is background noise, like the street or when traveling. It may be convenient for you, but it is an affront to the listening audience. Surely, "proper behavior precedes Torah" (Vayikra Rabba 9:3). Therefore, the first thing to deal with as far as questions posed to Rabbis on the radio is respect for the audience.

Some ask: How can proper behavior precede Torah? Surely we know that Torah study leads to proper behavior.

Yet the process is a gradual one. Good character precedes Torah, and then, through Torah learning, one achieves still more lofty character traits (Orot Ha-Torah 12:5. See Sichot Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehuda, Shemot, p. 345).

Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Pinchas Hirschprung, who served as the Av Beit Din of Montreal, quotes Rashi at the start of Bereshit, who asks why the Torah began with a history lesson rather than starting with Shmot 12, where the Jewish People are given their first Mitzvah as a people, establishing a Jewish calendar.

Rashi answers that if the nations say the Jewish People are thieves who stole the Land of Canaan from the nations, the Jews can point to the Book of Bereshit, which shows that G-d in fact gave the Land to them. Rav Hirschprung comments that we derive from this that even if a Jew knows the entire Torah, if he is a thief, his learning is worthless (Gedulat Pinchas, p. 49).

2. Radio Broadcasts Addressing Women

Question: Rav Aviner always says, "Hello to our Ma'azinot [female listeners] and Ma'azinim [male listeners]," putting the females first. Yet didn't Yaakov put the males of the family before the females as they were approaching their rendezvous with Esau (see Bereshit 31:17 and Rashi)?

Answer: Yaakov did so because the males were with him more as far as learning Torah. The case there has no bearing on proper etiquette. It likewise says, before the Revelation, "So shall you say to the House of Yaakov [referring to the women], and speak to the people of Israel [referring to the men]" (Shemot 19:3).

Rashi comments that we must teach Torah in the following order: first the House of Yaakov, the women, and only then the people of Israel, the men. See Maharal's Drush Al Ha-Torah (d.h. Vayehi Bachodesh Hashelishi).

Note as well, that when a woman asks Rav Aviner a question on the radio, he responds: "Who is the Ma'azin?", using the word for a male listener, and he does so for reasons of modesty. See the Talmud, Shabbat 140b, where women answering the door are advised to ask: "Who is it?" in the feminine form.

3. Precise, Concise Wording

The caller should be both precise and concise. He should give all the necessary details, but nothing more. He is best off writing down the question and reading it instead of asking it at length.

The caller has to be precise in his question. Often the Rabbi gets lost from all the details.

On the show Dragnet, Sgt. Joe Friday use to say: "Just the facts ma'am."

It's good for people to learn how to express themselves concisely.

Rav Aviner therefore often repeats the question to be sure he's relating to the right question, and repeats the context so he can answer with that context in mind.

4. The Prohibition against Insult

According to Jewish law, it is forbidden to insult people.

All the more so it is forbidden to insult a Torah scholar (see Perek Be-Hilchot Tzibbur, by Maran Ha-Rav Avraham Yitzchak Ha-Cohain Kook, Ma'amarei HaRe'eiya, p. 55).

And all the more so it is forbidden to insult the Prime Minister, because some of the laws of kings apply to him as well (see Responsa Mishpat Cohain #143).

If a caller insults anyone with his question, Rav Aviner will not talk to him, and, indeed, will rebuke the caller.

5. Forbidden Gossip

The Chafetz Chaim explains in his Laws of Lashon Hara 2:1 that if someone gossips publicly, his sin is compounded by the number of people who hear it. Therefore, if someone utters forbidden gossip in his question, his sin is according to the number of listeners!

6. Interrupting One's Fellow Speaker

Some people ask a question, and when Rav Aviner it, they interrupt him. Pirkei Avot 5:7 teaches, "There are seven marks of a stupid person, and seven of the wise man... the wise man does not interrupt the speech of his companion... and the reverse is true of the stupid person."

Our Sages find a source for this in Bamidbar 32. The tribes of Gad and Reuven wanted to settle in Transjordan. Moshe responded, "Why are you staying there? That's not right!" Or, in the Torah's language: "Are your brothers to go to war while you stay here?" (v. 6). Moshe meant: We are going to conquer Eretz Yisrael. The entire Land of Israel shall be conquered by the entire People of Israel, and you've found yourselves a spot to settle? Shall you reenact the sin of the spies? They answered: No! Heaven forbid! That's not what we meant! "We ourselves will cross over as shock troops" (v. 32), and Moshe was satisfied.

The question is raised: Why didn't they interrupt him in the middle, saying, "Moshe! Don't get upset! We didn't explain ourselves well!" The answer is that they didn't want to interrupt him. They listened quietly, bearing the rebuke all the way through, waiting patiently. Only then did they make clear their intentions. They would not interrupt him.

The same goes for the long polemic in the Book of Iyov. Iyov's friends never interrupted one another. Each one waited his turn and spoke politely and courteously. They spoke harsh words to Iyov, and he listened patiently.

It is known that dolphins converse with one another. Dolphin conversations have been recorded, and these animals have never been heard interrupting one another.

7. Discussion? Debate?

Rav Aviner's radio program is not a forum for discussion or a debate. Rather, it is what it is billed as: an "Ask the Rabbi" program. In other words, the listener asks a question and the Rabbi answers it. If you have an urge to engage in a talk-radio discussion, please call one of the other programs. There are plenty of them. See Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein's introduction to his Shut Igrot Moshe, in which he explains that he answers all questions as best he can, and does not obligate anybody to accept the answer.

8. Spokesman for Other Rabbis?

Please don't ask Rav Aviner about the rulings, opinions or utterances of other Rabbis. They did not appoint him as their spokesman or representative. Also, don't instruct Rabbis what to do. Quite the opposite, you must obey what the great Rabbis of Israel say, and not order them around.

9. You can call his home.

For complex, personal or discrete questions, Rav Aviner can be called at home. His number can be obtained from 144, Israel's operator assistance.

10. Listen to the Rabbi's Answer

Don't guess what the Rabbi will say. Listen to his answer. Many times he answers the question and people repeat the same exact question, because they did not listen to the answer.

The reason we ask Rabbis questions is to receive an answer from him, and not from ourselves.

Therefore, please listen.

Truth or Superstition?

Segulah for Buying a House

Q: Is buying Mezuzot a Segulah to easily purchase a house?

A: No (And so too Shut Doresh Tzion of Ha-Rav Ben Tzion Mutzafi: There is absolutely no Segulah in this).

Showering at Night

Q: Is it true that it is forbidden to take a shower after midnight?

A: No (And so too Shut Doresh Tzion of Ha-Rav Ben Tzion Mutzafi: It is a lie and deceit).

Segulah of Cleaning a Shul

Q: Is cleaning a Shul a Segulah for finding a match?

A: Every Mitzvah brings a person blessing (And so too Shut Doresh Tzion of Ha-Rav Ben Tzion Mutzafi: I don't know that it is a Segulah, but I do know that it is a Mitzvah).

Piece from the Wedding Glass

Q: Is saving a piece of glass broken under the Chupah a Segulah for finding a match?

A: It is a new innovation (And so too Shut Doresh Tzion of Ha-Rav Ben Tzion Mutzafi: Nonsense. And Ha-Rav Chaim Kanievski answered: We have not heard of such a thing. Segulot Raboteinu, p. 231).

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