

levels in the Temple: The Temple Mount, the courtyards, the Holy, the Holy of Holies. And what is in the Holy of Holies? The Torah. I am full of Torah, full of the word of Hashem and I bring it to others. What do you think? How can I give it to others if I do not possess it myself?

Understand me. We, the Cohanim, are not an isolated and separated group. We are with you. We are connected and attached to you. All of the effort we exert in life is for you. You have certainly heard about our elder, Aharon Ha-Cohain, of whom it is said: "Aharon shall bear the names of the sons of Israel on the Breastplate of Judgment on his heart when he enters the Holy, as a constant remembrance before Hashem" (Shemot 28:29). The entire Nation of Israel is on his heart.

I have nothing. I do not have fields. I do not have vineyards. I do not have factories. Everything I have is for the Nation of Israel. But I do not worry. I know that any place I go I will receive from a cheerful face what I need for a modest life. And you also do not need to worry that perhaps "you will be embarrassed" that you spend your entire lives involved with physical work. You know that there are religious people who are against building the Land, agriculture, and the army. They fear that the profane will swallow up the holy. I am not afraid. Just the opposite. I think that it is impossible to build a state with half of one's energy. But what about fearing the profane? On account of this, I exist and am traveling among you. I am an "angel" who travels among the living. My world is not outside of life or after life. It is even forbidden for me to come in contact with the dead. I am among the living. I am not a Cohain who is closed-off, but a Cohain who travels around.

Every place I go, everyone excitedly brings me something from his fruits. This one brings oranges and that one brings bananas for my children. I do not force anyone; just the opposite, everyone happily gives to me. I am also happy to give them what I have. Over the course of a few weeks I soak up incredible holiness in the Beit Ha-Mikdash, and pass it out all year long, in an endless number of personal conversations. Sometimes complex questions arise in life, and one needs to take counsel. It is true that there are judges and sages for this purpose, but sometimes it is preferable to consult a Cohain. I did not invent this idea. It is explicitly written that if you are in doubt about something: "You shall go to the Cohanim, the Levi'im and the judges who will be in those days" (Devarim 17:9).

I will now reveal a secret to you, the entire truth. Everything I do for you is because I love you. Yes, I love you, I love all of you. When I bless you, I do not simply say a blessing, but I say: "Who has made us holy with the holiness of Aharon, and has commanded us to bless His Nation Israel with love." This is the holiness of Aharon: "Loving peace and pursuing peace, loving people and bringing them closer to the Torah" (Pirkei Avot 1:12).

Rav Aviner on...

The Twenty Commandments Regarding Text Messaging Rabbis

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Terumah 5774 - Translated by R. Blumberg]

1. Fundamental Questions of Faith: Don't ask in a SMS why evil was created in the world, why man was created, why the Holocaust occurred, how do we know that G-d exists. Doing so shows a terrible disrespect for such questions.
2. General Halachic Questions (they are too complex for a short answer): Don't ask why the Chief Rabbinate forbade ascending the Temple Mount; whether a soldier can refuse orders; how we know whether food is Kosher.
3. Questions in Torah Learning: Don't ask in an SMS for help with understanding a text from the Talmud, Rambam or Shulchan Aruch. This is not how one learns Torah.
4. Sources: In an SMS, don't ask for sources, either to help you with homework, a university assignment or out of general interest. This is not an "information booth".
5. Education and Marriage: In an SMS, don't ask questions about education or marriage. That shows disrespect for these important topics. Make a phone call.
6. Halachic Surveys: We ask Rabbis halachic questions in order to abide by the answers. If you are just asking out of curiosity, be honest and say so in advance. The Rabbi can then decide whether to answer, and how to answer. When questions he is asked have practical relevance, he works hard to answer them. Don't burden him for no reason.
7. Another Rabbi's Opinion: Don't ask Rabbi A what Rabbi B thinks. Ask Rabbi B, or one of his students, directly.
8. Collation of Opinions: Don't ask what are the opinions of all the Rabbis on a particular topic. An SMS is not an encyclopedia or a Torah lecture. The Rabbi answering only provides his own view.
9. Yeshiva Students: If you are a high school or post-high school Yeshiva student, ask your Rebbe or Rosh Yeshiva. Don't bother someone from the outside.
10. The Local Rabbi: With questions that relate to a specific place, ask the Rabbi there: In a particular yeshiva, ask the Rosh Yeshiva. In a city or town, ask the local Rabbi. In a synagogue, ask the synagogue's Rabbi. In a youth movement, ask the movement's Rabbi, or the Rabbi of its local branch.
11. Mistakes: Before you send a Rabbi an SMS, make sure that there are no mistakes and that the language is clear. Such inaccuracies can make the question unintelligible and the answer will be wrong.
12. Don't start a dialogue: Ask your question with all the facts and don't disclose details bit by bit in more and more SMS's. Don't follow up your question with, "Does that apply

to Ashkenazim, too? To Sefardim?” Ask up front. If you don’t, assume the answer is all-inclusive.

13. Clarifications: Don’t respond, “I don’t understand,” because it is impossible to guess what you didn’t understand. Also, in the midst of hundreds of questions, it is impossible to guess which question was yours.

14. Rationale: Don’t respond, “Why?” As above, amongst hundreds of questions, the Rabbi cannot guess to which question you were referring. If you want an explanation, ask for it in advance. You can also peruse the published response of the Rabbi in question.

15. Urgent!: Don’t write “Urgent!” Once the Rabbi sees it, he will answer it immediately. Before he sees it, when he is dealing with a hundred other questions that arrived first, he cannot guess that there is question marked “urgent”. If it’s urgent, call.

16. Repeat Questions: If you were not answered, don’t send the same question several times, and don’t send a demand for an answer. It won’t help. Either the Rabbi has not yet gotten to the question, or he has decided not to answer it for one reason or another.

17. Hatred: Don’t ask questions about whether it is permissible/appropriate/a Mitzvah to hate evildoers/Leftists/Rightists/Charedim/secularists/National Religious/politicians – in short, anyone who is not exactly like you. The answer to all those who crave hatred is, “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Vayikra 19:18). "As yourself" means without discriminating or making exceptions, without any tricks or plotting. Literally, “as yourself” (Mesillat Yesharim 11).

18. Closing the Door: Many Rabbis have stopped answering SMS’s due to the plethora of unjustified, foolish or insulting questions. The result is that even those who truly need this important, vital service like the air they breathe, are left without it. Therefore, don’t cause the door to close. Love your neighbor as yourself.

19. Squandered Time: Many Rabbis have likely stopped answering because it causes them unjustified loss of their Torah-learning time. Only a Mitzvah that cannot be done by others justifies our forfeiting Torah-learning time (Moed Katan k9:1-2). So consider well whether this Mitzvah and this kindness that you are asking for has to be performed in this manner.

20. Thank you: Some petitioners say thank you, while others do not, thinking this is a service that is due to them. In any event, the Rabbis forgive them in advance.



Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim P.O.B. 1076 Jerusalem 91009 Tel.02-6284101 Fax.02-6261528

www.ateret.org.il To subscribe, send e-mail to: toratravaviner@yahoo.com

