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Text Message Q&A #23

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Ha-Rav answers hundreds of text message questions a day! Here's a sample:

Wood for Lag Ba-Omer Bonfire

Q: When I collect wood for the Lag Ba-Omer bonfire, how can I know that it does not belong to someone else?

A: You may not take it unless you are 100% certain that it is ownerless.

Q: But it is impossible to be certain?

A: Then it is forbidden to take it.

Flag of the State of Israel

Q: Does the flag of the State of Israel possess holiness? Does one have to kiss the flag if it falls on the floor? Must it be put in the Geniza if it is worn out?

A: No. It does not contain holiness. But one must obviously treat it with respect (see Nefesh Ha-Rav, pp. 99-100. Shut Igrot Moshe, Orach Chaim 1:46. We heard from Rav Aharon Rakefet that Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein once said that he did not regret any of the Teshuvot he wrote, aside from in this Teshuvah about davening in a shul which has the flag of Israel using the term "Wicked" when referring to those who made the Israeli flag).

Ba'al Teshuva

Q: Many women don't want to marry me because I am a Ba'al Teshuvah, and people only suggest women who are Ba'alot Teshuvah, as if I am blemished?!

A: They are mistaken. But you make the same exact mistake when you refrain from considering a Ba'alat Teshuvah.

Can-opener

Q: Does a can-opener require immersion in a Mikveh?

A: No. It does not come in direct contact with the food.

#### National Depression

Q: The difficult security situation and the horrible news causes me depression. How is it possible to be happy?

A: By looking at things with one's intellect and in their proper perspective, where the good is infinitely greater than the difficult.

#### Lashon Ha-Rav and Sefirat Ha-Omer

Q: My fellow workers are constantly speaking Lashon Ha-Ra and it is impossible to prevent it. Is it permissible to listen to music in order not to hear the Lashon Ha-Ra?

A: Yes.

#### Secular Date

Q: How should one write the secular date on an invitation?

A: One should not write the Christian date at all, but only the Hebrew date. If there is no choice, then do not write the number of the month but its name, and one should skip the year all together.

#### Photographer of Women

Q: As a wedding photographer, is it permissible for me to take pictures of women dancing, since some of them are dressed immodestly?

A: It is forbidden. Since it is forbidden to look at women, whether modestly or immodestly dressed, even in a movie and a picture. A woman photographer is required.

#### Kaddish for Grandfather

Q: Should I say Kaddish for my grandfather if I am the only one who can do so?

A: You are not obligated, but it is proper. But you need permission from your parents.

#### Witness to a Car Accident

Q: I witnessed one car backing up into a parked car. The driver who backed into the other car did not leave a note. What should I do?

A: Ask the driver to inform the other person. If he does not, then you should inform that person.

#### Raising Small Animals in Eretz Yisrael

Q: Is it permissible to raise small animals in the Land of Israel today? [This is based on the Mishnah in Bava Kamma (79b) that one may not raise small animals, i.e. goats and sheep, in the Land of Israel, to prevent the destruction of crops due to the animals' grazing (Rashi)].

A: On condition that the animals are well guarded, so there is no damage to your neighbors.

#### Teacher Looking at Student's Cell Phone

Q: Is it permissible for a teacher to snoop around and look at a student's cell phone?

A: Only in an exceptional situation in which there is potential physical or spiritual damage to the student which would override the decree of Rabbenu Gershom (which forbids reading other people's correspondence).

#### New Testament

Q: It is permissible to read the New Testament in order to know it, but not to believe it?

A: It is definitely forbidden. Rambam, Hilchot Avodah Zarah 2:2.

#### Picture Album on Shabbat

Q: Is it permissible to sort and organize pictures in an album on Shabbat?

A: No, it is selecting.

#### Radio on Shabbat

Q: What should one do if the radio accidentally turns on on Shabbat, and the neighbors can hear it?

A: Do not turn it off. Put something over it like a blanket. If it is not digital, turn the volume dial in an unusual way.

#### Police Officer during Sefira

Q: Is it permissible for a police officer to shave during Sefira?

A: If it is necessary.

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