



Text Message Q&A #30

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

Bar/Bat Mitzvah

Q: What is the source that a Bar Mitzvah is at 13 and a Bat Mitzvah is at 12?

A: It is a Halachah Le-Moshe Mi-Sinai – an oral tradition which Moshe Rabbenu received at Mt. Sinai (Shut Ha-Rosh 16, 1).

"Nusach Achid"

Q: I am Sefardi but feel a closer connection to "Nusach Achid" (The "Unity" Nusach for davening) than the Nusach of Sefardim. Can I use it?

A: "Nusach Achid" is essentially "Nusach Sefard" of Ashkenazim (which was introduced by the Chasidim in Eastern Europe). One should, as much as possible, use the Nusach of one's father and ancestors (Shut Yechaveh Da'at 3:6. We have heard in the name of Ha-Rav Shlomo Goren, who established "Nusach Achid", that his intention was not to create a Nusach to unite Klal Yisrael, but to use in the army where it is difficult to distribute all types of different Siddurim. He therefore chose this Nusach, which contains aspects of the various traditions).

Torah or Gemach

Q: Is it preferable for me to attend a Torah class or perform an act of loving-kindness (Gemilut Chesed) if they occur at the same time?

A: Gemilut Chesed, if there is no one else to replace you. Moed Katan 9a-b.

Payment for Damage

Q: Someone damaged my car and paid restitution. Is it permissible for me to use the money for a different purpose?

A: Yes. He is obligated to pay for the damage, but the money is yours.

Buying and Returning

Q: Is it permissible to buy an object, use it, and return it to the store?

A: G-d forbid.

Homosexual Tendencies

Q: I heard that it is impossible to change homosexual tendencies. If this is so, why did Hashem forbid it?

A: It is not true. But even if there is a tendency which is impossible to change, this does not permit one to violate a transgression. All of us have tendencies, and it is incumbent upon us to overcome them. This is a human being's service of Hashem.

Nostradamus

Q: Are the prophecies of Nostradamus true? Many of them have come to fruition.

A: No. Since they are indistinct, many events can appear to fit within them.

Water Gun

Q: Is it a waste of water (Bal Tashchit) for children to play with water guns?

A: No, since playing is considered essential for children, and the water guns use a negligible amount of water.

Long Hair

Q: Is it permissible for a boy or man to have long hair?

A: No. There are three severe Torah prohibitions that are transgressed by having long hair: 1. Creating an impediment between one's head and Tefillin, and therefore causing a blessing to be recited in vain when putting on Tefillin. 2. Following the ways of the non-Jews (which includes acts of conceit and haughtiness). 3. "Lo Tilbash" (the prohibition of men dressing or appearing as women) (Shut She'eilat 1:23).

Q: How then did the Rogachover (Ha-Rav Yosef Rosen, author of Tzafnat Pane'ach) and Ha-Rav Ha-Nazir (Ha-Rav David Cohain, Rosh Yeshiva in Mercaz Ha-Rav) grow long hair?

A: The Rogachover did not go to the barber because of a concern of "Bitul Torah" (taking away from Torah learning), but he is an exceptional genius, who is not a figure to be imitated. And regarding Ha-Rav Ha-Nazir, the Torah, the Torah commands a Nazir not to get a haircut.

Criticism

Q: My wife doesn't like it when I make a comment about her hair covering. What should I do if she is showing more hair than the Halachah allows?

A: Ask her if she wants you to point it out.

Q: She does not.

A: Then do not do so. It will not help. Rather concentrate your energies on improving yourself.

Cursed Apartment

Q: Is there a problem with renting an apartment in which a man committed suicide?

A: No. The transgression is in the man. The apartment is totally fine.

Appointing a Woman

Q: Is it permissible to appoint a woman to the Knesset? If not, what should we do?

A: We should not appoint a woman. It is immodest. Maran Ha-Rav Kook in Ma'amrei Ha-Re'eiyah, pp. 189-194. We must therefore wait patiently. Everything will work out (When Golda Meir became Prime Minister, a student asked Ha-Rav Joseph Soloveitchik: Is it permissible to appoint a woman to such a position? After all, the Rambam [Hilchot Melachim 1:5] brings the Halachah of the Sifri, that we learn from the verse [Devarim 17:15] "You shall surely set a king over you" – a king and not a queen. Ha-Rav Soloveitchik immediately answered: And appointing Ben Gurion was not a question? Although he was not a woman, he was not religious, and it was also forbidden to appoint him [see Shut Igrot Moshe Yoreh Deah 2:45]. The answer is that they did not ask us, and the responsibility of these appointments is therefore not incumbent upon us. Nefesh Ha-Rav, pp. 90-91).

Appointing a Non-Jew

Q: Is it permissible to appoint a non-Jew to the Knesset? If not, what should we do?

A: We also should not appoint a non-Jew. Rambam, Hilchot Melachim 1:4. Comments of Rabbenu Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah at the end of the book "Mishpatei Ha-Melachim" of Ha-Rav Federbush. . We must therefore wait patiently. Everything will work out.

Special thank you to Orly Tzion for editing the Ateret Yerushalayim Parashah Sheet

