



Text Message Q&A #31

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

Carnage on the Roads

Q: Wouldn't it be proper to establish public fasts and days of prayer for the carnage which occurs on Israeli roads? After all, Massechet Ta'anit says that we should do this in order to prevent tragedies from occurring.

A: We must keep things in perspective. We should certainly be very careful when driving, and remember that 300 people are killed every year from car accidents. But there are other things that are even more life-threatening: smoking kills 10,000 people a year (including 1,600 from second-hand smoke), and over-eating and eating unhealthy foods kills even more.

Wasted Time at Work

Q: I wasted time at work on various occasions. How can I make up for this?

A: Work extra hours when you can.

Basketball Player with a Kippah

Q: Isn't it a "Kiddush Hashem" (sanctification of Hashem's Name) to have a professional basketball player who wears a Kippah?

A: No. Kiddush Hashem is performing acts which have value. We do not establish what these acts are, rather Hashem establishes them, and they are explained in Hilchot Yesodei Ha-Torah of the Rambam, chap. 5.

Organic Food

Q: How much money should one spend on organic food in order to eat in a healthier way?

A: There have been about two hundred research studies on the topic of organic foods, and there is almost no evidence that they are healthier.

Q: But everyone says that they are healthier!

A: "Everyone saying" it is not scientific proof.

Computer Games

Q: Is it permissible to allow children to play computer games?

A: Yes, with the condition that the quantity and quality are limited: minimal time and kosher content.

Car Lights on Shabbat

Q: Should one point out to someone driving on Shabbat that his head lights are off?

A: Yes. Pikuach Nefesh (life threatening situation).

Keys on the Table

Q: My family has the custom not to put keys on the table since it will bring the evil eye. Is this true?

A: Nonsense.

Date of Death

Q: What should we do about observing a Yahrtzeit if we do not know the date of death?

A: Choose a date that is as close as possible to the most probable date of death.

Disparaging Arabs

Q: I have seen young religious men singing "Death to Arabs." In my opinion this is a desecration of Hashem's Name. I therefore request that you object to this.

A: I have written about this many times, but seems from your comment that perhaps I should cease from doing so. Despite tens of articles and many objections on the radio, my message has not reached you. This is a sign that I am exerting effort in vain.

Dog

Q: When a dog approaches me in the street, I am stricken with terror. Is there a verse I can recite in order to overcome this fear?

A: Tehilim 22:21. "Save my soul...from the power of the dog."

Plucking your Eyebrows

Q: Is it permissible for a man whose eyebrows are attached to one another to pluck the hair in the middle to separate them?

A: It is forbidden because of "Lo Yilbash" (not dressing or acting like a woman). Removing something which is ugly is permissible, but enhancing beauty is forbidden.

Educating for Modesty

Q: At what age should a child be educated not to touch members of the opposite gender?

A: As in all areas, the age of education is 6.

Hitting Back

Q: Is it permissible for a child who is being hit at school by another student to hit him back?

A: Yes. Sefer Ha-Chinuch #338. But the school can establish a rule that one may not hit back, and should instead turn to a teacher to deal with such situations.

Cheating on Tests

Q: I often fail tests because I do not cheat. I would get a higher grade if I copied from others.

It is possible that because of my integrity, I lose out?

A: The reward for a Mitzvah is not always in this world.

Trying on Shoes

Q: Is it permissible to try on shoes in a store to know the right size so that I can order them on the internet?

A: You should request permission in the store.

Project with Noodles

Q: Is it permissible to do a project with children in which we take noodles, color them, and make a necklace, or is it Bal Tashchit (wantonly destroying food)?

A: It is permissible. Bal Tashchit is destroying something when there is no need. Children playing and learning is considered a need (Shut She'eilat Shlomo 1:128).

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