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Text Message Q&A #35

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

Lifeguard

Q: Is it permissible to swim where there is no lifeguard? If it is forbidden, what did they do 300 years ago, when there were no lifeguards?

A: It is forbidden. To our distress, many drowned.

Mitzvot outside of Israel.

Q: I heard that there is no value in observing Mitzvot outside of Israel, since the Mitzvot are to be observed by Am Yisrael in its Land?

A: One must certainly observe the Mitzvot there since they are the supreme service of Hashem from the Torah, but the essence of the Mitzvot is their performance in Eretz Yisrael (see Rashi on Devarim 11:18. Ramban ibid. Maran Ha-Rav Kook in Eitz Hadar. Mei Maron 6:12).

Torah Reading

Q: If I am davening Shemoneh Esrei during the Torah reading and therefore miss it, do I have to make it up?

A: No. The Torah reading is a communal obligation (Biur Halachah, chap. 124. Shut Igrot Moshe, Orach Chaim 4:23. Shut Yabia Omer vol. 4 Yoreh Deah #31. Ma'aseh Ish vol. 3, pp. 121-122. And not like the opinion of Reb Chaim of Brisk. See Nefesh Ha-Rav, p. 130. Divrei Ha-Rav, pp. 151-152. Likutei Ha-Grach, pp. 25-26).

Kivrei Tzadikim (the Graves of the Righteous) on Shabbat

Q: Is it permissible to visit Kivrei Tzadikim on Shabbat?

A: There is no prohibition. But the "Kuntres Zichron Yishai" (p. 40) in the back of the book "Ma'avar Yabok" brings in the name of Sha'ar Ha-Yichudim of Rabbi Chaim Vital that there

is no benefit since the righteous are not found there on Shabbat, Yom Tov, Rosh Chodesh or Chol Ha-Moed.

Subway outside of Israel

Q: Outside of Israel, where Shuls are often far from where people live, is it permissible to buy a subway ticket before Shabbat and travel to shul on Shabbat?

A: No. It is carrying a ticket which is Muktzeh, and in the Public Domain. It is a weekday activity and the custom is not to do so (Shut Mateh Levi 2:19).

Shiduch with Someone from another Community

Q: Is it proper to go on a Shiduch with someone from another community (i.e. Ashkenazi and Sefardi, Sefardi and Ethiopian, Yemenite and Ashkenazi, etc.) or is it better to find someone from the same community since he will have a similar background as me?

A: The community is not important. The essence is the person himself.

Socks

Q: Does a woman who does not wear socks have an opinion on which to rely?

A: The Mishnah Berurah in chap. 75. And Ha-Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach wrote that one should not force women to wear socks, and it is permissible to rely on the Mishnah Berurah. The book "Oro Shel Olam", p. 94. And also see there where Ha-Rav Shlomo Zalman says the same about Chabad women wearing Sheitels.

Cats

Q: What is the source that cats have 9 lives?

A: Nonsense.

Refraining from Sinning

Q: When I refrain from sinning, such as not speaking Lashon Ha-Ra, is it considered a Mitzvah?

A: Yes, when you overcome your inclination. Kiddushin 39. For example, overcoming taking revenge.

Eating the Foreskin

Q: Does eating the baby's foreskin after a Brit Milah heal barrenness?

A: This is a strange Minhag and we do not follow it. Machazik Berachah, Yoreh Deah #79.

Traveling to Poland

Q: Is it worthwhile to travel to Poland in order to see what the Jews went through?

A: No. It is preferable to visit Yad Vashem, and give the money you would have spent on the trip to poor Holocaust survivors who are here now (Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah vol. 3 #44).

Compost on Shabbat

Q: Is it permissible on Shabbat to throw peels and vegetables into the compost container in our backyard?

A: No. It is preparing on Shabbat for a weekday.

Pe'ot

Q: I have long Pe'ot. Which is preferable: Behind my ears, in front of my ears, wrapping them around my ears or putting them under my Kippah?

A: It does not matter. It is a personal decision. It is best to act like everyone else (see Orchot Rabbenu vol. 1, p. 236 that the Chazon Ish and the Steipler Gaon were particular not to "hide" Pe'ot behind the ears).

Animal Experimentation

Q: Is animal experimentation permissible?

A: Yes. It is not in the category of "Tza'ar Ba'alei Chaim" (causing pain to animals), since it is for a human need (Shut Seredei Eish 3:7. See Chelkat Yaakov 1:30).

Seeing-Eye Dog

Q: Is it permissible for a blind person to bring a seeing-eye dog into Shul?

A: The basic Halachah is that it is permissible, but one should check the custom in that particular Shul (Shut Igrot Moshe, Orach Chaim 1:45. Lubavitcher Rebbe, Igrot 6:936. And not like the opinion of Ha-Rav Menachem Mendel Kasher in Torah Sheleimah vol. 16, p. 147. Shut Chelkat Yaakov 3:87. Sha'arim Metzuyanim Ba-Halachah 13:2).

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