



Text Message Q&A #37

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

Doubtful Loan

Q: I have two Tzedakah boxes in my home and I took a loan from one of them and do not remember which one. What should I do?

A: Repay the loan to both Tzedakah boxes.

Immodest Advertising

Q: Is it permissible to buy a product from a company which has immodest advertising?

A: It is permissible. This is not our responsibility. But it is obviously preferable to buy from another company.

Laziness

Q: I am lazy. I do not have a desire to learn Torah. I only want to sleep.

A: Repair yourself slowly, in stages.

Computer on Shabbat

Q: I need to buy a laptop computer for my studies, but I cannot prevent my brother from using it on Shabbat. What should I do?

A: Buy it. It is not your responsibility.

Suicide

Q: A young man says that he will commit suicide if a particular girl does not return his phone call, and we do not know if he is serious or joking. What should we do?

A: She should not return his call. This would be giving in to emotional blackmail. Tell his parents (see Sanhedrin 75a).

"The King who causes death"

Q: Why do we praise Hashem as "The King who causes death" (in the second blessing of the Shemoneh Esrei)?

A: Death is also a supreme Divine kindness, which allows the separation of the soul from the body. Each one of them is then purified on its own, and will be ready to reunite in purity during the Resurrection of the Dead.

Scarecrow

Q: Is it permissible to set up a scarecrow whose base is a cross?

A: It is permissible. This is not a cross of idol worship.

Lefty

Q: I am a lefty. Are there books which detail the special halachot for a lefty?

A: 1. Ha-Rav Chaim Kanievski in the booklet "Ish Itar" in his book on Massechet Tefillin. It is also printed separately with the commentary "Yemin Moshe". 2. A few Teshuvot in Shut Be'er Moshe of Ha-Rav Moshe Stern. 3. Ha-Rav Gedalya Goldberg in "Ben Ish Yemini". 4. Ha-Rav A. Horowitz in Dvar Halachah, vol. 2.

Rabbinic Mitzvot

Q: Why are we lenient when there is a doubt regarding a Rabbinic Mitzvah? Is a Rabbinic Mitzvah less than a Torah Mitzvot? After all, the Torah says "Lo Tasur" – do not turn away from what the Rabbis tell you - which gives a Rabbinic Mitzvah the strength of a Torah Mitzvah?

A: There are different levels even amongst Torah Mitzvot.

Empty Cans and Bottles

Q: Is it permissible for me to collect empty cans and bottles on Shabbat in order to get the deposit?

A: They are Muktzeh, and collecting them is preparing on Shabbat for a weekday. There are other problems with this as well.

Avoiding Taxes

Q: Ha-Rav wrote that avoiding taxes is theft. At my wedding, two of the witnesses work on the black market. Does my Kiddushin count?

A: Yes, since this transgression – to our great distress – is common and people do not act in the proper way with regards to its severity. Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 34:4, 28. Shut Maharam Mi-Lublin #15. Shut Rabbi Akiva Eiger #96.

Halachah and Kabbalah

Q: What do we do if there is a contradiction between Halachah and Kabbalah?

A: The Vilna Gaon claims that there is no contradiction, and if one does perceive a contradiction, it is a sign that he does not understand properly. Deep down, everything is one.

Cemetery before Wedding

Q: What is the source behind the custom of going to the cemetery before a wedding and inviting one's relatives who have passed away?

A: There is no source, but it is the custom of some people.

Refrigerator light on Shabbat

Q: What should one do on Shabbat if he opens the refrigerator door and the light goes on?

A: Place a towel on the door so that it does not close. Food that is perishable should be placed in the freezer or placed in a neighbor's refrigerator, and non-perishable food should be pushed to the back of the refrigerator.

Benefiting from Shabbat Desecration

Q: I am religious and my family is secular. On Shabbat, they turn on the lights and the air-conditioner. Is it permissible for me to benefit from them?

A: Yes, but do not intend to do so, i.e. it is permissible to be in the house, but do not purposefully go close to the air-conditioner or read by the light.

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