



Text Message Q&A #48

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

Garden Gnomes

Q: Is it permissible to put statues of dwarves (garden gnomes) in my garden?

A: Yes, if they are not complete figures. Shut Da'at Cohain (#65).

Electric Razors

Q: Is it permissible to use an electric razor?

A: The Chafetz Chaim forbids it since it is similar to a razor which gets close to the skin. Likutei Halachot Makkot. And all the more so today, when electric razors get even closer to the skin than before. Chazon Ish. Shevet Ha-Levi. Minchat Yitzchak 4:113. But some permit its use, provided that one not place the electric razor too close to the skin. Maran Ha-Rav Kook in Shut Orach Mishpat 128, 53. Ha-Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank. To determine whether it is far enough away, you should rub your hand over the skin to make sure you can still feel the scruff. Ha-Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach. Halichot Shlomo on Tefillah, chapter 2, p. 11. And there are those who permit using an electric razor if it cuts the hairs little-by-little and not a lot all at once, as this is not considered destroying the hairs of one's beard. Techumin #14, #22. But this is a major innovation (There is a story about a Holocaust survivor who knew the Satmar Rebbe before the Holocaust and came to visit the him in America. The Rebbe's students saw a clean-shaven Jew speaking about all sorts of Torah subjects with the Rebbe and were surprised. After he left, one of the students asked the Rebbe: who is this clean-shaven person who came to speak with the Rebbe? The Satmar Rebbe responded: "When that Jew ascends to give a divine accounting, Hashem will ask him: "Jew, where is your beard?" But when you ascend to give a divine accounting, Hashem will ask you: "Beard, where is your Jew?").

Unity among the Nation

Q: Does the unity we saw among the Nation during the process to free Gilad Schalit signify something, such as the arrival of the Redemption?

A: Baruch Hashem, the Redemption began 130 years old with the Return to Zion, the building of the Land, the establishment of the State and the return of the Torah to Eretz Yisrael. Unity also returned, and the greatest unity is found in Tzahal with the self-sacrifice of one for another.

Borrowing from a Borrower

Q: Is it permissible for me to borrow an object from someone who borrowed it from someone else?

A: No. You need permission from the lender.

Hands in Pockets during Davening

Q: Is it permissible to put my hands in my pockets during davening?

A: Certainly not. You must stand as if you are before a king.

Lengthening Prayer

Q: Should a Cohain who davens slowly, shorten his prayer to order to recite Birkat Cohanim?

A: It is preferable, since reciting Birkat Cohanim is a Torah Mitzvah.

Yashar Koach after Birkat Cohanim

Q: Should one say "Yashar Koach" to the Cohanim after Birkat Cohanim?

A: There is no obligation, but it is permissible. The important thing is not to yell it out, since doing so detracts from the holiness of the davening and the Shul. It should be said quietly. (Piskei Teshuvot 128 note #222).

Q: Can the Cohanim respond: "Beruchim Tehiyu" or is there a problem of "Bal Tosif" – adding to the Mitzvot – since instead of three blessings, they are now reciting a fourth?

A: They are not obligated, but it is permissible (see Shut Har Tzvi 1:62. Aruch Ha-Shulchan 128:24).

Kever David

Q: Is it permissible for Cohanim to enter the Kever of King David?

A: King David is not buried there, although it does seem that it is a Jewish grave. Ir Ha-Kodesh Ve-Ha-Mikdash of Ha-Rav Yechiel Michal Tukatinsky vol. 2, p. 79. Cohanim should therefore not enter.

Star of David

Q: What is the source for the Star of David in Judaism?

A: There is no source.

Avraham wearing a Kipah

Q: Did Avraham Avinu and Moshe Rabbenu wear a Kippah?

A: They wore a head covering which was even bigger than a kippah, since the Rambam writes in Hilchot De'ot (5:6) that covering one's head is a sign of modesty and they were extremely modest.

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



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