



Text Message Q&A #52

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

Driving on Shabbat

Q: If there is a life-threatening situation and one must drive on Shabbat, is it permissible to turn off the car upon arrival?

A: Yes. It is dangerous to leave the motor running. It could also lead to theft, including by terrorists or dangerous thieves. But you should turn it off with a "Shinui" (in an unusual manner).

Sandek

Q: There is a big dispute in our family as to who should be Sandek at the Brit Milah – the paternal grandfather or the maternal grandfather. What should we do?

A: The custom is that the paternal grandfather takes precedence, but it is not obligatory. They should therefore draw lots.

Circus

Q: Is it permissible to bring children to a circus which is specifically designed for the religious community, in which there are only male performers?

A: If they are young, since it is "Moshav Leitzim" (frivolity). Avodah Zarah 18b.

Galei Tzahal (Israel Defense Forces Radio)

Q: Is it permissible to listen to Galei Tzahal – they are left-wingers?

A: There is no prohibition against being a left-winger. Furthermore, they are not left-wingers but are representative of the entire community. In practice, it is permissible to listen to any station on condition that it broadcasts only Kosher material.

Am Yisrael

Q: Did Hashem choose us or did we choose Him?

A: He – the Blessed One – chose us (Blessing over learning Torah).

Pre-Torah Writings

Q: Ancient writings, which precede the Torah, had been found with stories and laws similar to the Tanach. If so, is the Tanach copied from them?

A: The existence of these is known. 1. There were prophets which preceded the giving of the Torah. 2. There are certain ideas which are relevant to the universal human spirit. 3. The Master of the Universe included proper and Kosher ideas within the Tanach. Sefer Eder Ha-Yakar of Maran Ha-Rav Kook.

"Na Nach Nachma Nachman"

Q: What is the source of some Breslover Chasidim saying "Na Nach Nachma Nachman Me-Uman" in order to bring personal and national salvation?

A: There is no source for it. It is a new innovation.

Q: Why isn't it considered "Darkei Emori" (superstition) to think that it brings salvation?

A: Breslover Chasidim do not actually believe this, rather it awakens G-d-fearing among them. Regarding "Darkei Emori", see Pesachim 112a and Shut Rashba 1:167.

Pictures of the Sun and Moon

Q: I learned that it is forbidden to make a picture of the sun and moon. But I have noticed that many people are not concerned about this.

A: There are those who permit it if there is no association with idol worship. Commentary of Rambam on Mishnah Avodah Zara. Shut Da'at Cohain #64.

Mermaid

Q: Do mermaids exist? I remember learning about them in the Gemara?

A: They do not exist. The Gemara theoretically discusses what the law would be regarding a creature such as this (Bechorot 8a. Rashi. See Netivot Olam, Netiv Ha-Torah, Netiv #14).

Learning the Satmar Rebbe's Books

Q: Does one receive the reward for learning Torah for the Satmar Rebbe's books?

A: Certainly.

Olim from Ethiopia and Chanukah

Q: Should Olim from Ethiopia celebrate Chanukah?

A: Yes. Even though their ancestors were not part of the miracle of Chanukah (since they were exiled to Ethiopia beforehand), they are part of Klal Yisrael.

Dwelling in Jerusalem

Q: Why did you establish a Yeshiva in the so-called Muslim Quarter?

A: It is a Mitzvah to dwell in the entire breadth of our Land, and all the more so in Jerusalem, and all the more so in the heart of Jerusalem.

Earrings for Girls

Q: Why is it permissible for girls to have their ears pierced - they are deforming their bodies.

A: It is negligible (Ha-Rav Aharon Lichtenstein – Rosh Yeshiva of Har Etzion, related that his daughter wanted to have her ears pierced, but he had doubts as to whether it is permissible. They agreed to go together and ask Ha-Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, and follow his ruling. Ha-Rav Auerbach did not understand what Ha-Rav Lichtenstein wanted from him, and he said: "What is even your question? By us, boys have a Brit Milah and girls have their ears pierced!" Ve-Alehu Lo Yibol vol. 2, p. 172).

War over Yehudah and Shomron

Q: What did Rabbenu Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah mean when he said: "There will be a war over Yehudah and Shomron"?

A: He himself explained in writing and orally (recorded) that this is not practical instruction but an educational idea to awaken self-sacrifice. He never gave a practical ruling to act in this way. And see Baba Batra 130b, that in order to follow a given instruction it must be given as a clear halachic ruling.

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



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