



Text Message Q&A #94

Ask Rav Aviner: mororly@bezeqint.net

Prepared by Rabbi Mordechai Tzion

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

Purpose of Prayer

Q: What is the purpose of prayer?

A: To serve Hashem with our emotions. "And serve Him with all of your heart" (Devarim 11:13. See introduction to Tefilat Amecha vol. 1, pp. 7-15).

Eretz Yisrael Vomiting out Sinners

Q: The Torah says that Eretz Yisrael will vomit out sinners (Vayikra 18:25, 28). If so, how is it possible that our country contains so many Jews who are far from Torah observance?

A: It is a sign that they are not sinners according to this definition, as explained by Rabbi Avraham Azulai in Chesed Le-Avraham (Ma'ayan Shelishi, Ein Ha-Aretz, Nahar 12). They are sinners in their individual lives but not in their communal lives. Orot #84. They are bad on the outside but good on the inside. Igrot Ha-Re'eiyah, Igeret #555 (see Alo Na'ale #41).

Bread on the Street

Q: If I see bread thrown in the street, must I pick it up?

A: You are not obligated to do so, as no one will eat it since it's dirty, and it no longer has the status of bread for this Halachah (This is also the ruling of Ha-Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv. Kav Ve-Naki #58).

Giving the Benefit of the Doubt

Q: Is giving someone the benefit of the doubt a Mitzvah or a pious act?

A: A Torah Mitzvah. "Judge your fellow favorably" (Vayikra 19:15). And see Pele Yoetz, entry on "Sanagoria".

Experiments on Corpses

Q: Is it permissible in medical school to perform experiments and operations on corpses of people who donated their bodies to science?

A: Almost all of the halachic authorities forbid it, but it is permissible on non-Jewish corpses, since different laws apply to their bodies even in their lifetimes. Shut Da'at Cohain (#199).

Learning Torah with Secular Jews

Q: Is it permissible to say words of Torah to secular Jews who have not recited the blessing over learning Torah?

A: Yes, as our Rabbi Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah ruled (Ha-Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv also rules this way. Kav Ve-Naki #9).

Cohain who Married a Divorcee

Q: If a Cohain married a divorcee (which is forbidden according to Halachah), is the Shul exempt from saying Tachanun (as in the case of a permissible marriage)?

A: Certainly not. This is not a day of joy but a day of sadness (This is unlike the ruling of Ha-Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv who exempts them from saying Tachanun, since he is still a groom and it is a Yom Tov for him. Although he does rule that this Cohain should not receive an Aliyah since he should not be honored when he violated a transgression. Kav Ve-Naki #25).

Mitzvot between One Person and Another

Q: What is more important to teach a child – Mitzvot between a person and Hashem or between one person and another?

A: Hashem prefers Mitzvot between one person and another. Rosh at the beginning of Peah. The reason is that Mitzvot between one person and another are included in Mitzvot between a person and Hashem (since people were created in the image of Hashem).

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Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim P.O.B. 1076 Jerusalem 91009 Tel.02-6284101 Fax.02-6261528
www.ateret.org.il To subscribe, send e-mail to: mororly@bezeqint.net

