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Text Message Q&A #96

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

#### Idol Worship

Q: I am in India. Is it permissible for me to go to a festival in honor of one of their idols and take a picture, with the clear understanding that I do not believe in it?

A: It is forbidden. Rambam, Hilchot Avodah Zarah 2:2-3.

#### Mourner Answering Amen to "Ha-Makom Yenachem Etchem..."

Q: Should a mourner answer Amen to "Ha-Makom Yenachem Etchem...", or remain silent?

A: He should answer Amen, as we do for all blessings and greetings. And I have seen this done by great Torah scholars (and this is recorded in Pnei Baruch 11:5 in the name of Ha-Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Shut Teshuvot Ve-Hanhagot 1:691, 3:377 and 4:274 and in the name of Ha-Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv. Although Ha-Rav Chaim Kanievski says that the custom is to remain quiet. Halichot Chaim vol. 2, p. 150).

#### Traffic Lights on Shabbat

Q: Is one obligated to obey traffic lights on Shabbat? What if there are no cars?

A: Yes, on account of the danger. Even if there are no cars, one must obey, on account of the general principle.

#### Learning during the Repetition of the Shemoneh Esrei

Q: Is it permissible to learn Torah during the repetition of the Shemoneh Esrei, if there is a Minyan without me?

A: No. Our Sages stated: "Prayer and learning Torah each have their own time". Shabbat 10a. See Mishnah Berurah (124:17. See Shut Igrot Moshe Orach Chaim 4:19. In the city of Brisk, someone was looking in a book during Chazarat Ha-Shatz and after the davening, Reb Chaim

Brisker said to him: Is your "Hatmadah" (constant Torah learning) so great that you are unable to find time to learn later? You should listen to the Chazarat Ha-Shatz. Shut Revivot Ephraim 3:116. Similarly, when the students asked Ha-Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach if it is permissible to learn Torah during the repetition of the Shemoneh Esrei, if there is a Minyan without them, he scolded them: Do you learn Torah all day long to the extent that you are missing learning during Chazarat Ha-Shatz? Halichot Shlomo, chapter 9 note #11. And the great Rabbis listen with awe to every word during the Chazarat Ha-Shatz without even glancing into a book. These include: Maran Ha-Rav Kook [Sichot Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah on Yechezkel – Gilyon #64], Ha-Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer [Be-Derech Eitz Ha-Chaim vol. 1, p. 41], the Steipler [Ashcavtei De-Rebbe, p. 12] and Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein [Shut Revivot Ephraim 5:61]. Ha-Rav Chaim Kanievski says that learning Torah during the repetition of the Shemoneh Esrei, it is a Mitzvah performed through a transgression. Orchot Yosher, p. 104).

#### Mezuzah for non-Jew

Q: Is it permissible to give a non-Jew a Mezuzah so he will be healed?

A: No. See Rambam, Hilchot Mezuzah 5:4, 6:13.

#### Learning Torah and Feeling

Q: I learn Torah but do not feel the benefit. Should I leave yeshiva?

A: This question was asked by Maran Ha-Rav Kook's son-in-law, and Rav Kook responded that he also does not feel it, but in the future one will feel it. This is similar to a child who eats but does not feel that he is growing, but in the end his growth will be apparent. In general, a positive feeling is important, but it is not everything. One must also be serious and fulfill one's obligation (Ginzei Ha-Re'eiyah – Sivan. See Mesilat Yesharim, chap. 1).

#### King Shaul

Q: When I speak about King Shaul, must I say "King", or is it permissible to just say Shaul? What about other kings?

A: We have not found a law that one must add the title "King".

#### Violation on the Internet

Q: My wife caught me looking at immodest sites on the internet and feels that I have betrayed her and does not want to have anything to do with me. What should I do?

A: She is right. You must pacify her. You must find the way to do so yourself. This will take time. It is similar to a broken arm which requires both a cast and time to heal.

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